BASED ON THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING SERIES

Five Nights at Freddy's™

FAZBEAR FRIGHTS

GRAPHIC NOVEL COLLECTION VOL. 4



SCOTT CAWTHON

COOPER • WAGGENER • CAMERO • MacPHERSON • SAWYER

ADAPTED BY CHRISTOPHER HASTINGS

BASED ON THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING SERIES

Five Nights at Freddy's™

FAZBEAR FRIGHTS

GRAPHIC NOVEL COLLECTION VOL. 4

BY SCOTT CAWTHON,

ELLEY COOPER, AND ANDREA WAGGENER

ADAPTED BY CHRISTOPHER HASTINGS

THE BREAKING WHEEL

ILLUSTRATED BY DIANA CAMERO

COLORS BY JUDY LAI

SERGIO'S LUCKY DAY

ILLUSTRATED BY CORYN MACPHERSON

COLORS BY GONZALO DUARTE

THE CLIFFS

ILLUSTRATED BY BEN SAWYER

COLORS BY EVA DE LA CRUZ

LETTERS BY TAYLOR ESPOSITO

graphix

An Imprint of

SCHOLASTIC

Copyright © 2024 by Scott Cawthon. All rights reserved.
Photo of TV Static: © Kikki/Dreamstime

All rights reserved. Published by Graphix, an imprint of Scholastic Inc., *Publishers since 1920.* SCHOLASTIC, GRAPHIX, and associated logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc.

The publisher does not have any control over and does not assume any responsibility for author or third-party websites or their content.

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded, decompiled, reverse engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereafter invented, without the express written permission of the publisher. For information regarding permission, write to Scholastic Inc., Attention: Permissions Department, 557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

e-ISBN 978-1-339-00533-1

First edition, January 2024

Michael Petranek, Editorial Director, Graphix Media

Rachel Prater, Production Editor

Jeff Shake, Senior Designer

Inks by Ben Sawyer, Coryn MacPherson, and Diana Camero

Colors by Eva De La Cruz, Judy Lai, and Gonzalo Duarte

Lettering by Taylor Esposito

Layout Compositor, Dawn Guzzo

THE BREAKING WHEEL

WHEN MS. BILLINGS FIRST INTRODUCED THE CONCEPT OF EXOSKELETONS FOR US TO BUILD, SHE'D DEFINED THEM AS "CRUDE FRAMES THAT COULD BE ATTACHED TO OTHER THINGS FOR ADDED MOBILITY."

NATURALLY, THAT MADE ME THINK OF BUILDING SOMETHING TO FIT OVER MY LITTLE SISTER'S **EXTREMELY** ANNOYING BABY DOLL.

I COULD MAKE IT COME TO LIFE, MOVE AROUND, AND **SCARE HER.** CLASSIC BROTHERLY PRANK!

BUT AT THIS POINT IN THE SEMESTER, THAT VISION ISN'T LIKELY GOING TO BECOME REALITY.

WHAT AM I DOING IN THIS CLASS? HIGH SCHOOL **ROBOTICS?**

I WAS BARELY GETTING THROUGH BASIC CHEMISTRY BEFORE THE GENIUS TWINS, SHELLY AND PICKLE, TALKED ME INTO JOINING THEM HERE.

AT THIS POINT IN THE SEMESTER, IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT I DO.

I'M GOING TO CRASH AND BURN ON THIS PROJECT IN SPITE OF **WHATEVER** I LEARN . . .

. . . OR DON'T LEARN.

"IT'S FUN WHEN WE TAKE CLASSES TOGETHER," SHELLY SAID.

CLANK

UGH.

THE TRUTH IS I'D DO PRETTY MUCH ANYTHING SHELLY WANTS ME TO DO.

SHELLY AND HER BROTHER, THEY'RE LIKE FAMILY. WE'VE BEEN FRIENDS FOR TOO LONG FOR ME TO THINK OF HER AS ANYTHING BUT A FRIEND.

BUT LATELY . . . I HAVE BEEN THINKING ABOUT WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE IF WE WERE MORE THAN THAT.

STOP!

STOP MOVING!

MS. BILLINGS! PICKLE'S STUPID REMOTE IS INTERFERING WITH MY EXOSKELETON *AGAIN!*

CAN YOU MAKE HIM SWITCH FROM A RADIO TO AN INFRARED SIGNAL?!

YOU MEAN DILBERT?

YEAH, LITTLE DILL PICKLE. MAKE HIM STOP IT.

MAN, I HATE HIM. JUST THE SOUND OF HIS VOICE DRIVES ME WILD.

HMM.

NOT TO MENTION HIS ATTITUDE.

SORRY, WHAT WAS THAT? I'VE FINISHED THE ROBOT ASSIGNMENT, SO I'M TRYING TO GET AHEAD ON MY READING FOR AP WORLD HISTORY.

NEVER MIND.

DILBERT, CAN YOU EXPLAIN TO THE CLASS YOUR REASONING FOR USING AN RF REMOTE?

I'M USING THE RF AS AN IR EXTENDER, TO MAKE THE SIGNAL EFFECTIVE THROUGH WALLS.

IT ISN'T MY FAULT MY REMOTE WORKS ON JULIUS'S EXOSKELETON.

JULIUS COULD INSTALL A SIGNAL FILTER, OR CHANGE ITS RECEIVER TO A DIFFERENT FREQUENCY.

HE COULD CHECK HIS MACROS. IT'S POSSIBLE THEY WERE PROGRAMMED TOO CLOSE TO MINE.

HE MIGHT HAVE EVEN *STOLEN* MY MACROS.

I DID NOT!

DILBERT MAKES EXCELLENT POINTS, JULIUS. WE LIVE IN A WORLD FILLED WITH RF SIGNALS. IT'S UP TO YOU TO IMPLEMENT THE SOLUTION, NOT TO DEMAND CHANGES FROM OTHERS.

:SNRK:

TOMORROW WE'LL BE MOVING ON TO A DEEPER DISCUSSION ON ACTUATORS, SO YOU MAY WISH TO BRUSH UP AT HOME THIS EVENING.

RIIIIING

YOU'LL HAVE PLENTY OF TIME WITH TODAY'S HALF DAY! AND BE SURE TO CATCH YOUR BUS, BECAUSE THE SCHOOL WILL BE COMPLETELY LOCKED UP BY NOON.

NO AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES. NO LATE BUSSES. ALL THE TEACHERS ARE OFF TO THE CONFERENCE AS SOON AS THE DOORS ARE CLOSED.

ARE YOU COMING OVER TO OUR HOUSE FOR STUDY LUNCH?

OH YEAH, YOUR MOM ALWAYS MAKES GREAT AFTER-SCHOOL EATS.

DID PICKLE ALREADY LEAVE?

OH, THERE HE–

WAIT, STOP–

UNGH!

CLONK

GAH!

NOBODY SAW . . .

DANG IT. CLUMSY AGAIN . . .

NOT EVEN PICKLE REALIZES JULIUS TRIPPED HIM.

THAT **JERK.** LOOK AT HIM, SMILING LIKE A . . . LIKE A **VAMPIRE.** I WISH I COULD **STAKE HIM** THROUGH THE **HEART,** IF HE EVEN HAD ONE.

SNF

SHELLY, DID YOU SEE-

PICKLE, WAIT UP!

WHAT ARE YOU STARING AT?

BET YOU WISH YOU COULD BUILD SOMETHING LIKE THIS, HUH?

I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING IN THIS CLASS.

I SHOULD GO. DON'T ANSWER HIM. JUST LEAVE.

I MEAN, AT LEAST YOUR FRIEND HAS A FEW BRAIN CELLS.

AND THE WEIRD HAIR-CHEWING CHICK IS PRETTY BASIC, BUT WITH A LITTLE MAKEUP, SHE WOULDN'T BE TOO BAD TO LOOK AT.

AM I GOING TO JUST LET HIM TALK ABOUT MY FRIENDS LIKE THAT? ABOUT SHELLY LIKE THAT?

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO? HIT ME?

YOU SAW WHAT I DID TO THAT LOSER WITHOUT LIFTING A FINGER. I JUST MOVED MY FOOT, AND NOW HE HAS A BLOODY NOSE.

JUST THINK OF WHAT I COULD DO TO *YOU*.

HE'S RIGHT. I CAN'T FIGHT HIM. JUST GO. MOVE!

WHAT'S GOING ON, DUMMY? CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE?

THEN YOU CAN LISTEN. SEE THIS? I WAS GOING TO USE IT TO BE STRONGER AND FASTER, BUT LOOK AT ME. I DON'T NEED THAT.

SO INSTEAD, WHEN IT'S COMPLETE, I'M GOING TO MAKE *YOU* WEAR IT. IT WON'T BE HARD TO HOLD YOU DOWN AND STRAP YOU IN.

I'LL CONTROL THE EXOSKELETON, AND *YOU'LL* HAVE TO BE MY SERVANT. YOU'LL CARRY MY BOOKS. TIE MY SHOES. BRING MY FOOD. CLEAN UP AFTER ME.

MAYBE I'LL EVEN MAKE YOU DANCE FOR ME. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT, YOU TROLL-FACED LOSER? WOULD YOU DANCE LIKE A MONKEY FOR ME?

HA HA HA HA . . .

WANT TO SEE IT IN ACTION? IT'S PRETTY AMAZING, IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF.

WHAT IS HE PLANNING ON DOING WHEN HE HAS THAT ON?

WHY AM I HANGING AROUND TO FIND OUT?

THE BUSSES ARE ABOUT TO LEAVE. IF I DON'T LEAVE SOON, I'LL HAVE TO WALK TO SHELLY AND PICKLE'S HOUSE. SEVEN MILES, ALL BECAUSE ALL I CAN DO IS STAND HERE LIKE AN IDIOT.

SEE HERE? I'VE EQUIPPED THE EXOSKELETON WITH LOCKING MECHANISMS SO ONCE I GET YOU IN IT, I CAN *KEEP* YOU IN IT.

AND NOW I'LL POWER IT UP . . .

. . . SO YOU CAN *SEE*—

CLICK

VZT

KRAAKAA BOOOM

VRRR

IS HE . . .

. . . IS HE ALIVE?

YES.

UNGH . . .

I KNOW WHAT TO DO NOW.

SNCK

SNCK

UNGH . . .

HRK–

CLANK

WHAT . . .

I THINK YOUR EXOSKELETON SHORT-CIRCUITED . . .

AND THEN I MUST HAVE LOCKED YOU IN. MY BAD.

WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO, PUNK? UNLOCK ME!

WHY? SO YOU CAN JUST MAKE US SWAP PLACES?

I DON'T THINK SO.

DO WHAT I TELL YOU! UNLOCK ME!

SCHOOL BUS

SCHOOL BUS

HONK HONK

THAT'S THE BUSSES ABOUT TO LEAVE. I DON'T THINK I HAVE TIME TO UNLOCK YOU. GOTTA GO.

I'M GOING TO DO YOU A FAVOR.

I'M GOING TO LEAVE YOU HERE IN YOUR SUIT OVERNIGHT SO YOU CAN GET AN IDEA OF WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO HAVE SOMEONE TREAT YOU THE WAY YOU TREAT EVERYONE ELSE. LIKE THEY DON'T MATTER.

MAYBE YOUR ROBOT CAN TEACH YOU A THING OR TWO.

HEY! NO! UNLOCK ME!

HAVE FUN.

GET BACK HERE, YOU MORON! DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'VE DONE?!

HA HA HA HA HA!

THE SCHOOL IS ALREADY EMPTY. NOBODY WILL FIND HIM UNTIL TOMORROW.

AND WHO'S GOING TO BELIEVE HIM WHEN HE SAYS "THAT WUSS REED" DID THIS? NOBODY WILL THINK I WOULD HAVE THE COURAGE.

I'M GOING TO KILL YOU!

CUTTING IT CLOSE, MY BOY. CUTTING IT CLOSE.

THANKS FOR WAITING, MR. JANSON.

SCHOOL BUS

HEY, YOU OKAY?

EH, NOT THE FIRST TIME IT'S HAPPENED. I CAN IGNORE IT.

SCHOOL BUS

I'LL KILL YOU, REED! DO YOU HEAR ME?! I'LL KILL YOOOOOOU . . .

IN THE DARK AGES, HARSH TORTURE WAS COMMONLY USED TO PUNISH THOSE WHO BROKE THE LAW.

HUH-

WHAT DID YOU SAY?

DOES SHE KNOW WHAT I DID?!

MY AP WORLD HISTORY READING. IT'S INTERESTING . . .

ONE OF THE MOST COMMONLY USED FORMS OF TORTURE WAS CALLED THE WHEEL.

THOSE CONDEMNED TO BEING CONSTRAINED IN THIS WAY HAD PROLONGED TORTURE AHEAD OF THEM. THEY WERE HELD IN PLACE, UNABLE TO FREE THEMSELVES.

TORTURE. WAS WHAT I DID TO JULIUS TORTURE? HE CAN'T EAT, OR DRINK, OR GO TO THE BATHROOM . . .

DOES SHELLY KNOW WHAT I DID? SHE COULDN'T . . .

IT WAS SOMETIMES CALLED THE BREAKING WHEEL, BECAUSE IT WAS USED TO CRUSH THE BONES OF THE CONDEMNED.

ON THE WHEEL, A PERSON WOULD BE REDUCED TO A MUTILATED BAG OF BONES, WHAT ONE ONLOOKER DESCRIBED AS A "WRITHING, MOANING MONSTER WITH BLOODY TENTACLES."

EW . . .

JULIUS MIGHT BE UNCOMFORTABLE, BUT IT'S NOTHING THAT BAD. RIGHT?

YOU KIDS HAVE EVERYTHING YOU NEED BEFORE I HEAD TO MY CLASS?

THANKS SO MUCH FOR SNACKS AND DINNER, MRS. GIRARD.

YOU'RE WELCOME AS ALWAYS, REED. WE LOVE HAVING YOU HERE.

OKAY, I'M LEAVING! YOU ALL BEHAVE, OKAY?

IT'S ALWAYS SO NICE HERE. SO *COMFORTABLE.*

I FEEL MORE AT HOME HERE THAN I DO AT MY ACTUAL HOUSE.

STILL . . .

I SHOULD STOP FIDDLING AROUND. JULIUS HAS LEARNED HIS LESSON BY NOW. I DON'T WANT TO BE CRUEL.

*I'LL WALK TO SCHOOL, UNDO **ONE** OF JULIUS'S WRISTS, AND THEN RUN HOME OR HIDE BEFORE HE CAN GET OUT THE REST OF THE WAY.*

I'M NOT GETTING ANYWHERE WITH THIS ANYWAY.

=SIGH=

DO YOU WANT ME TO HELP YOU WITH THAT?

HUH?

YOU SIGHED.

EEE!

AND YOUR EXOSKELETON LOOKS LIKE IT'S BEING BUILT BY A MAN WITHOUT OPPOSABLE THUMBS . . . FOR AN ALIEN.

SHOULDN'T YOU BE A LITTLE MORE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR OWN ROBOT RIGHT NOW?

HUH?

CLACK

HA HA HA HA!

OH.

NO. IT'S BUILT TO BE STURDY.

JUST DON'T LET HIM RUN THE ROBOT INTO THE MODEL HOUSE. DAD WILL HAVE A CEREBRO-VASCULAR INFARCTION IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO IT.

YOU MEAN A *STROKE?*

*MAYBE I SHOULD LET PICKLE HELP. I THINK HE MADE **THAT THING** IN A DAY, AND LOOK AT IT GO NOW.*

MS. BILLINGS . . .

" . . . PICKLE'S STUPID REMOTE IS INTERFERING WITH MY EXOSKELETON AGAIN!"

IS IT POSSIBLE? COULD IT . . .

HEY, PICKLE?

HUH?

HA HA HA!

CLACK

THAT THING DOESN'T HAVE MUCH OF A RANGE, RIGHT?

NO, IT GOES PRETTY FAR, ACTUALLY.

WHAT IF IT WAS CONTROLLING, UM, SOMETHING OUTSIDE THE HOUSE? HOW FAR WOULD THE RANGE BE?

YOU MEAN IF THE SKELETON WAS OUTSIDE THE HOUSE AND ORY WAS INSIDE?

YEAH.

I'M NOT SURE . . .

IT MIGHT REACH TO A FEW FEET OUTSIDE THE HOUSE. INTERFERENCE WOULDN'T LET IT REACH MUCH FARTHER THAN THAT.

BUT I'VE NEVER CHECKED. WHY DO YOU ASK?

REED?

JUST CURIOUS.

ORY, BE CAREFUL! WHAT DID I JUST SAY ABOUT THE MODEL HOUSE?!

SERIOUSLY, SHEL, IT'S OKAY. THE ROBOT ISN'T GOING TO HURT IT.

HERE. ORY, DESIST FOR A MOMENT.

BUT, I WANNA . . .

I'M NOT TAKING IT AWAY FROM YOU. I'M GOING TO DO SOMETHING TO MAKE THE ROBOT MORE FUN.

AND MAYBE DISTRACT YOU FROM JUST SMASHING THE ROBOT INTO THINGS LIKE THE MODEL HOUSE . . .

WHAT DID YOU DO?

OH, I JUST TURNED OFF THE JOINT CONSTRAINTS. SO NOW MY ROBOT CAN GO AGAINST LOGICAL JOINT DIRECTIONS, TOO. LIKE YOURS, ONLY ON PURPOSE.

KR-TCH

KRACK-

TCH-TCH

CRNCH

EEE! YAY! HA HA HA!

THOSE SOUNDS . . .

THE POPS AND CRACKS OF METAL JOINTS DISLOCATING AND SCRAPING AGAINST METAL.

WHAT DOES IT SOUNDS LIKE WHEN IT'S BONE?

KEE-

RUNCH-POP

LIKE THAT.

NO. I DIDN'T HEAR THAT.

OF COURSE I DIDN'T. ALL IN MY HEAD.

PICKLE SAID THE REMOTE'S RANGE WOULDN'T REACH BEYOND THEIR HOUSE.

AND EVEN IF IT DID, I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO HEAR-

:BLUGH:

I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO HEAR REED'S **BONES** BREAKING. THE SCHOOL IS **MILES** FROM HERE.

IT'S **STUPID**. IT'S A **STUPID THOUGHT** THAT MAKES NO SENSE.

SO WHY DO I FEEL SO ROTTEN?

I HAVE TO GO. I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT JULIUS IS GOING THROUGH, IT'S MY FAULT, AND I HAVE TO FREE HIM.

NOW.

I JUST HOPE THAT EXOSKELETON ISN'T MOVING.

I'LL BE BACK.

I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING.

SLAM

BEEE

WHAT WAS THAT?

WIND MUST HAVE COME UP.

WE PROBABLY LOST ANOTHER BRANCH OFF THE BIG FIR TREE.

DID YOU SAY YOU HAD TO GO SOMEWHERE, REED? PERHAPS IT SHOULD WAIT UNTIL AFTER THE STORM . . .

". . . YOU DON'T WANT TO GET HURT . . . "

HEEEE . . .

SMACK

B-B-BOOM

ORY, SERIOUSLY, FIND SOMETHING ELSE TO BUMP THE ROBOT INTO.

SEE, REED? IMAGINE WHAT THAT WIND WOULD DO TO YOU. BETTER STAY FOR NOW.

COULD IT REALLY BE JULIUS OUT THERE?

WHAT IF HE TRULY HAD BEEN MANIPULATED BY PICKLE'S REMOTE THIS WHOLE TIME? WHAT KIND OF CONDITION WOULD HE BE IN?!

WHAT DO I DO?!

IF ORY WAS ACTUALLY CONTROLLING REED'S EXOSKELETON RIGHT NOW . . .

. . . WOULD HE EVEN LOOK HUMAN ANYMORE?

I WONDER IF THERE ARE ANY MORE OF THOSE CHICKEN WINGS?

OOH! OR THE JALAPEÑO POPPERS!

"ON THE WHEEL, A PERSON WOULD BE REDUCED TO . . . A WRITHING, MOANING MONSTER WITH BLOODY TENTACLES."

HOW ARE YOU HUNGRY ALREADY?

I CAN'T HELP IT!

CLACK

CLACK

CLACK

CRNCH CRNCH CRNCH

WHAT'S THAT SOUND?

SOMETHING CLIMBING UP THE HOUSE!

HAVE YOU BEEN INGESTING ADEQUATE HYDRATION? YOU'RE PROBABLY JUST *THIRSTY.*

I COULD GO FOR A SODA . . .

SKITTERING, SHUFFLING. MAYBE IT'S JUST A RACCOON.

MAYBE THE **SECOND** I DO ANYTHING A LITTLE GUTSY, MY BRAIN LOSES ITS GRIP ON REALITY. AM I GOING **INSANE** JUST BECAUSE I STOOD UP TO JULIUS?

WE DON'T HAVE ANY. MOM READ SOME ARTICLE ABOUT HOW OUR BODIES PROCESS CARBONATION AND SUGAR AND TURN THE COMBINATION INTO POISON.

WE REALLY SHOULDN'T LET HER READ.

IS IT A RACCOON, OR IS IT JULIUS? MANGLED, MONSTROUS JULIUS. WOULD HE EVEN BE HUMAN ANYMORE? OR ALIVE?

IF THE STORM'S DIED DOWN, WE CAN GO TO THE STORE FOR SODA.

WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S UPSTAIRS NOW–

REED? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

UH, SORRY. I JUST THOUGHT OF A BOOK I NEED TO BORROW. I WAS GOING TO GO GET IT. I SHOULD HAVE ASKED FIRST.

...

YOU DON'T NEED TO ASK. YOU'RE PRACTICALLY FAMILY. GO AHEAD.

WHAT IF I DO SEE JULIUS . . .

. . . WHAT REMAINS OF JULIUS . . .

. . . WHAT IF HE'S CLINGING TO THE SIDE OF THE HOUSE?

WHAT WOULD I DO?

AH!

SOMETHING SET OFF THE MOTION-ACTIVATED LIGHTS!

GULP

...

NOTHING'S THERE.

OF COURSE NOTHING'S THERE.

OR . . . HE'S JUST MOVED LIKE SOME GORE-BEDECKED ROBOTIC SPIDER, HOPING TO CATCH ME BY ANOTHER WINDOW THE SECOND I LET MY GUARD DOWN.

THE JULIUS THING COULD BE THERE RIGHT NOW. RIGHT ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THAT WALL, WAITING . . . READY . . .

READY TO GET HIS REVENGE FOR WHAT I DID.

WHY AM I EVEN UP HERE?

IF IT IS OUT THERE, I SHOULD BE NOWHERE NEAR THIS WINDOW.

AND IF IT ISN'T, IF I'M IMAGINING ALL OF THIS, THEN I SHOULD BE RUNNING TO SCHOOL TO FREE JULIUS AS FAST AS A I CAN.

NOTHING.

NOTHING HERE ANYWAY.

JUST CHECK ALL THE WINDOWS TO BE COMPLETELY SURE . . .

CAN'T SEE ANYTHING IN HERE—

OOOF!

CLINK C-RA-CK

THAT'S HIM! JULIUS! METAL! EXOSKELETON! HAND GRABBING MY FOOT!

AH!

JUST A TOY TRAIN.

REED?

UH, YEAH, SHELLY?

WE'RE GOING TO THE CORNER STORE FOR SODA. YOU GOOD HERE?

UH, YEAH.

DON'T GO IN ORY'S ROOM. YOU'LL BREAK A FOOT ON A TOY CAR. SEE YOU SOON!

THEY'RE OUT THE DOOR, AND . . .

SCHF SCHF SCHF SLAM

PHEW

THAT'S THE DOOR. NOTHING ATTACKED THEM.

KREAK

BUT THERE'S STILL SOMETHING ON THE HOUSE.

AND NOW I'M ALONE WITH IT.

PICKLE SAID A TREE BRANCH PROBABLY CAME DOWN. IT COULD JUST BE BRANCHES SCRATCHING AROUND.

AND EVEN IF IT **WAS** JULIUS, IT'S NOT LIKE THIS WOULD HAVE TURNED HIM INTO A MINDLESS KILLER.

HE'S STILL JUST A KID.

A HORRIBLE KID, MAYBE A BADLY INJURED KID, BUT STILL . . .

IF HE WERE TO SMASH THROUGH A WINDOW, I'D HEAR IT, AND ALL THE DOORS ARE LOCKED–

WAIT, DID THEY LOCK THE DOOR ON THE WAY OUT?

I DON'T KNOW IF I HEARD THEM LOCK THE DOOR.

NO, THEY MUST HAVE.

THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE.

I CAN'T LEAVE UNTIL THE OTHERS GET BACK. NOTHING LEFT TO DO BUT TRY TO FIX THIS PATHETIC ROBOT.

MAYBE IF I COULD STUDY PICKLE'S EXOSKELETON, IT WILL GIVE ME SOME CLUES ON WHAT TO DO . . .

BUT WHERE DID IT GO?

THERE! IN THE HOUSE.

IT MUST BE TUCKED BEHIND SOME MODEL FURNITURE IN THERE.

THE MODEL HOUSE REALLY IS AN AMAZING THING. EVERY SINGLE DETAIL IS EXACTLY AS IT IS IN THE REAL, NORMAL-SIZED HOUSE.

IT EVEN HAS AN EVEN SMALLER MODEL HOUSE ON A TABLE INSIDE OF IT IN ITS MODEL LIVING ROOM.

THERE YOU ARE-

WHUH-

SKREEEEE

NO!! AAAAH!

CRASH

TNK

TNK

TNK

TNK

CLINKAAAAAA

NO . . .

CKTCHK

HIIISSSSSSSS

SHELLY?! PICKLE?!

KRA-SLAM

TSSSSSS

AH!

HELP! SOMEBODY, ANYBODY, *HELP!*

WOOSH

HUFF

KRGTCH

CRACKTCH

THIS CAN'T BE REAL. THIS CAN'T BE REAL.

GOTTA GET PAST IT . . .

GOTTA GET OUT . . .

IT'S RIGHT ON TOP OF ME!

GRAAAAH!

HUH? BUT IT WAS . . .

THERE'S NOTHING THERE. MAYBE I AM LOSING MY MIND . . .

WHAM

AAAAH!!!

UGH!

=HRK=

GAH!

SPLT

UGH . . .

HIS HANDS . . .

THEY'RE TOO BROKEN TO KEEP A GRIP.

I MIGHT BE ABLE TO GET LOOSE!

YES!

HNNGGH . . .

WHIIP-TCH

NO! NO!

LET ME GO!

CRNCH CRNCH CRNCH

SKREEEEE

NO! NO! AAAH!

TCHUNKT

TCHUNKT

NOOOOOO!

TSSSSSS

PLEASE, PLEASE . . .

I'M SORRY. I'M REALLY SORRY. I DIDN'T KNOW THIS WAS GOING TO HAPPEN TO YOU.

TSSSSSSSS

I JUST WANTED YOU TO BE LOCKED IN OVERNIGHT. I DIDN'T WANT THIS TO HAPPEN-

MMMPFF!!!

VRRRRRRRRRRRRR

:GK . . . :

SSSSSS

SLAM

. . . DOESN'T SEEM LIKE SHE'S HOME YET. SCOT-FREE SODA.

CAN I PLAY WITH THE REMOTE AGAIN, PICKLE?

SURE, ORY. GO WILD. WE HAVE ALL NIGHT.

BUMP

B-BUMP

WAS THAT REED?

HE MUST STILL BE UPSTAIRS.

POP

KRAK

WHRRRRRRR

I'LL GO CHECK ON HIM.

SERGIO'S LUCKY DAY

I KEEP TELLING YOU, SERGE. YOU HAVE TO BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR.

HUH? WHAT DO YOU MEAN, DALE?

I MEAN YOU GOT THE PROJECT MANAGER JOB. YOU'RE COMING UP VERY QUICKLY AT THIS FIRM. CONGRATULATIONS.

NO WAY! THANK YOU!

BUT NOW YOU'RE GOING TO FIND OUT HOW HARD PROJECT MANAGERS WORK. ARE YOU READY TO START LIVING AT THE OFFICE?

WAIT, DALE, ARE YOU SERIOUS?

ONLY A LITTLE. YOU'LL PROBABLY ONLY HAVE TO SLEEP HERE THREE OR FOUR NIGHTS A MONTH.

I HADN'T REALLY THOUGHT OF THAT . . .

I WAS TOO BUSY WORRYING ABOUT KEEPING MY CAREER ACCELERATING. IT SEEMED LIKE THE NEXT LOGICAL STEP . . .

DON'T LOOK SO SHELL-SHOCKED, SERGE. YOU'VE GOT MASSIVE DRIVE, AND A RARE TALENT. YOU'LL HANDLE IT LIKE A CHAMP.

NOW PACK YOUR STUFF UP, BECAUSE YOU'RE MOVING INTO AN OFFICE.

AND WE'RE ALL GOING OUT FOR DINNER TO CELEBRATE YOUR PROMOTION! SEE YOU THERE.

CONGRATS, YOU IDIOT.

YOU REALIZE I'M YOUR BOSS NOW.

FINE. *MR.* IDIOT.

LATER . . .

EVERYONE SEEMS TO BE HAVING A GOOD TIME.

STRIKE THAT. EVERYONE BUT ME SEEMS TO BE HAVING A GOOD TIME.

WHY IS THAT? WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME? I JUST GOT GOOD NEWS. WHY DON'T I FEEL GOOD?

SERGIO? SERGIO.

SERGIO, DID YOU HEAR ME? I ASKED YOU A QUESTION.

HM?

RIGHT AS I'M ABOUT TO TAKE MY FIRST BITE OF STEAK?

LOOK AT HER. SHE'S GORGEOUS AND SWEET. SHE SHOULD ONLY ADD TO HOW IMPRESSIVE MY LIFE IS RIGHT NOW.

BUT I JUST THINK SHE'S ANNOYING.

WHAT IS IT?

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE THE NEW PROJECT MANAGER?

WELL, SINCE I DON'T START TILL TOMORROW, I'M NOT THE PROJECT MANAGER YET, AM I? SO, I DON'T KNOW.

gulp!

BAAAAAHA HAHAHAHAHA! YOU'RE SO FUNNY, SERGIO!

AM I? I WASN'T TRYING TO BE. I REALLY SHOULD APPRECIATE HOW MUCH SHE'S INTO ME.

BUT DEEP DOWN I KNOW VIOLET ISN'T WHO I REALLY WANT TO BE WITH.

SHE ISN'T SOPHIA. SOPHIA MANCHESTER.

HOW MANY YEARS HAS IT BEEN SINCE I LAST SAW HER? TEN? I DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE WITH HER IN HIGH SCHOOL. IF ONLY SHE COULD SEE ME NOW . . .

IT'S SO LATE. WHY DID I LET VIOLET CONVINCE US ALL TO GO DANCING? AM I ALWAYS JUST AGREEING WITH HER, NO MATTER WHAT?

=SIGH=

I WAS SO EXCITED WHEN I BOUGHT THIS THING. I'D WANTED A NICE SUV FOR YEARS . . .

SO WHY CAN'T I ENJOY IT? WHY IS IT THAT EVERY TIME I CLIMB A LITTLE HIGHER ON THE LADDER, IT SEEMS LIKE THERE'S EVEN MORE RUNGS ABOVE ME TO THE TOP?

AT LEAST IT'S LATE ENOUGH THAT I PROBABLY WON'T BE INTERROGATED BY MRS. BAILEY ON THE WAY HOME–

OH, IT'S JUST YOU, SERGIO! I THOUGHT I HEARD AN INTRUDER. YOU'RE QUITE LATE TONIGHT. HOT DATE? HOW WAS WORK TODAY?

PLEASE FORGIVE ME, MRS. BAILEY, BUT I'M AWFULLY TIRED AND I NEED TO GET TO BED.

OF COURSE, DEAR. GET YOUR REST.

=PHEW=

THE NEXT DAY . . .

RIIIIING

HELLO?

HI, MAMA.

SERGIO! WHAT A NICE SURPRISE! TONY, COME HERE. IT'S SERGIO ON THE PHONE.

I'M PUTTING YOU ON SPEAKER. YOUR PAPA IS HERE.

I'M JUST CALLING TO TELL YOU I GOT THAT PROMOTION I APPLIED FOR.

HEAD OF THE COMPANY? HA HA HA!

NO, PAPA. PROJECT MANAGER.

WELL, DON'T REST ON YOUR LAURELS. ALWAYS UPWARD. DID YOU CATCH THE GAME LAST NIGHT?

I MISSED IT BECAUSE WE WENT OUT TO DINNER TO CELEBRATE MY PROMOTION.

DID YOU MEET ANYONE?

HMPH. I STILL THINK YOU COULD DO BETTER THAN HER. I DON'T LIKE HOW SHE LAUGHS . . .

NO, MAMA. I WAS WITH VIOLET. YOU KNOW, MY GIRLFRIEND.

WHY IN THE WORLD DID I THINK I'D GET ANY VALIDATION FROM THEM THIS MORNING?

THIS IS A *MESS.*

HOW'S THE NEW JOB?

LET'S PUT IT THIS WAY—I KNOW WHY THE LAST GUY LEFT.

JUST ANOTHER DONKEY PASSING THROUGH.

HUH?

WE'RE ALL A BUNCH OF DONKEYS. CARROT AND STICK. WE PLOD ALONG TRYING TO REACH A CARROT THAT WILL FOREVER DANGLE OUT IN FRONT OF US, NO MATTER HOW FAR WE PLOD.

THAT'S DEPRESSING.

IT'S *FREEING!* IF WE CAN'T GET WHAT WE WANT, WHY BOTHER TRYING? JUST DO YOUR BEST AND HAVE A GOOD TIME.

HUH.

I'LL LEAVE YOU TO CHASING THAT CARROT . . .

. . . MR. IDIOT, *SIR.*

DAYS OF NEW STRESS . . .

STOMP STOMP STOMP

UH-OH.

. . . WITH NO RELIEF IN SIGHT.

BANG BANG

WELCOME TO THE BUILDING! OTHER PEOPLE LIVE HERE, TOO, AND NEED TO SLEEP!

. . . TURN TO WEEKS . . .

I NEVER GET TO SEE YOU ANYMORE OUTSIDE OF WORK, AND YOU'RE GOING TO SLEEP THROUGH OUR DATE?!

HRM? SORRY.

WORKING LATE, HUH?

YEAH, I THINK BEING ABLE TO COOK FOR MYSELF WILL HAVE TO REMAIN A DISTANT MEMORY.

PIZZA

YOUR SLOPPINESS COST THIS FIRM *THOUSANDS* OF DOLLARS.

I'M SORRY, DALE, I HAVEN'T GOTTEN MUCH SLEEP LATELY. I'LL DO ANYTHING TO MAKE UP FOR IT.

IT'S PART OF THE LEARNING CURVE. I UNDERSTAND. JUST DON'T LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN.

BUT ONE NIGHT, SERGIO'S LUCK WOULD CHANGE . . .

WHAT'S THAT NOISE–

WHRR-RRR-R

NO! SERIOUSLY? DON'T DIE ON ME!

CLANK!

WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP

TSSSS

A PRACTICALLY NEW SUV . . . GUESS I'LL HAVE TO GET A TOW.

ARE YOU KIDDING ME?!

I WORK SO HARD, AND JUST FOR THIS TO HAPPEN?

WHAT LUCK.

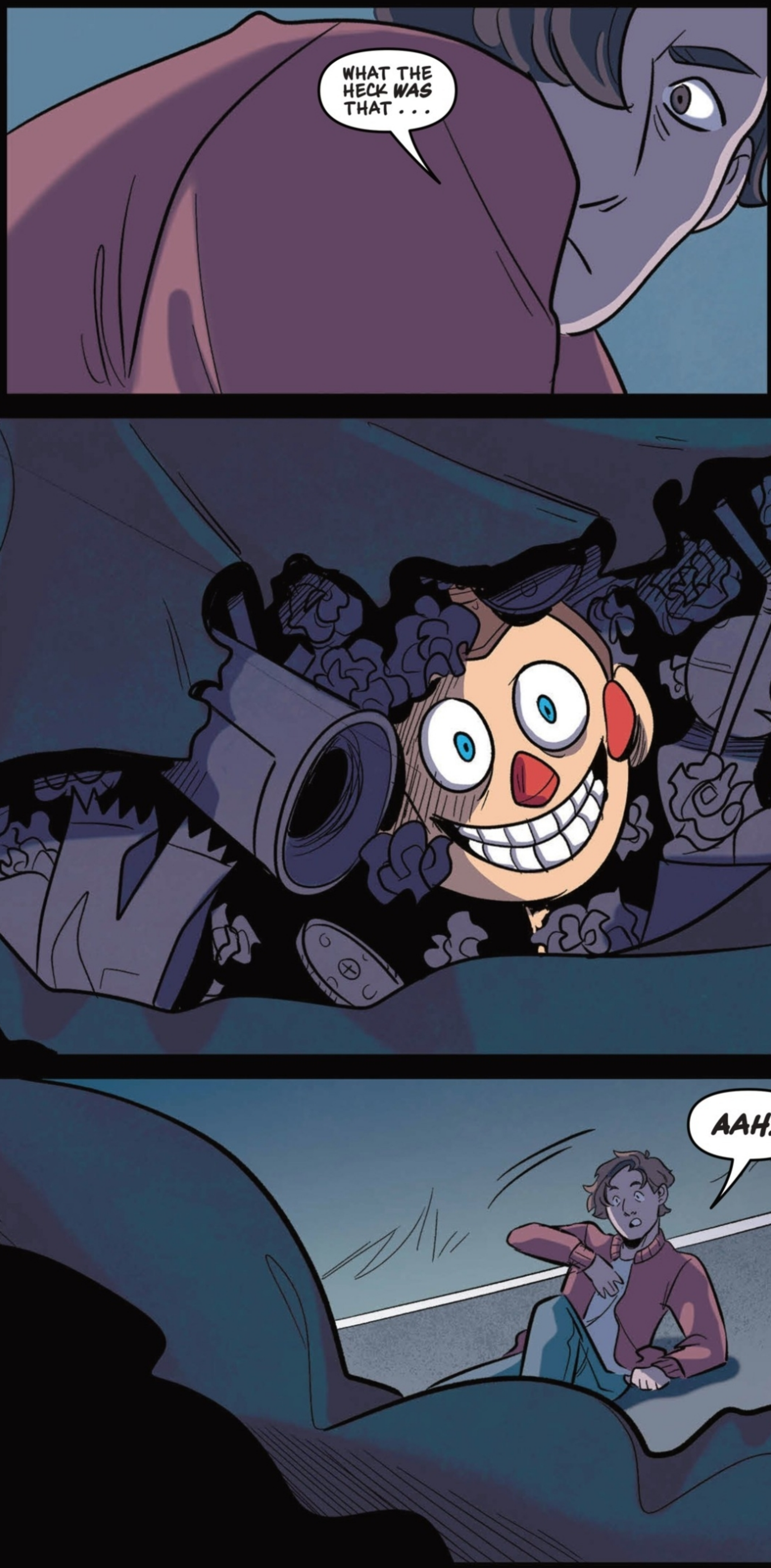
AH!

SHRIPT!

UGH!

HUH?

THE RAIN JUST . . . STOPPED?


WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT . . .
AAH!

WAIT, NO . . .

IT'S JUST A TOY. IT'S NOT REAL.

BUT WHAT *KIND* OF TOY . . .

HELLO . . .

IT'S YOUR LUCKY DAY

YOU'RE A LUCKY BOY, ARE YOU? DO YOU HAVE ANY TIPS? I COULD USE SOME LUCK.

I'M A LUCKY BOY.

IT'S ELECTRONIC?

BUT I DON'T SEE A SPEAKER, BATTERY COMPARTMENT, NOTHING . . .

MAYBE THAT'S THE ONLY THING IT SAYS.

FLIP

DO YOU HAVE A NAME?

MY NAME IS LUCKY BOY!

I NEVER WOULD HAVE GUESSED.

IT'S LUCKY TO BE LUCKY!

HEE HEE HEE!

I THINK I'LL KEEP YOU, LUCKY BOY.

A WEIRD-LOOKING ANTIQUE WOULD FIT RIGHT IN WITH THE REST OF MY DECOR.

. . . BLACK SUV. ONLY VEHICLE ON THE ROAD. YOU CAN'T MISS IT.

ZODIAC LIGHTERS

CAMP ETER

FUN FOR THE WHOLE FA

. . .

MISSING!

AN HOUR? OKAY. THANKS. SEE YOU THEN.

SLUSHES!

SORRY YOUR CAR BROKE DOWN, DUDE.

HEY, DO YOU WANT TO BUY A LOTTERY TICKET? IT COULD HELP PAY FOR CAR REPAIRS.

NO THANKS.

IT'S YOUR LUCKY DAY!

HM.

OKAY, I'LL TAKE THAT TICKET AFTER ALL. WHO KNOWS?

THE NEXT DAY . . .

I DIDN'T GET HOME UNTIL 3 A.M. LAST NIGHT.

GONNA HAVE TO TAKE A CAB TO WORK . . .

ANY WISE WORDS?

HEE HEE HEE!

TODAY'S YOUR LUCKY DAY!

YEAH, WE'LL SEE.

I, UH . . . FIXED THE MATH ON THESE FIGURES, DALE. I THINK . . .

WHAT'S GOING ON, SERG?

I'M SORRY. MY SUV BROKE DOWN LAST NIGHT. I GOT MAYBE TWO HOURS OF SLEEP.

GO HOME. WE'RE NOT OGRES HERE! YOU NEED SLEEP. MAYBE WHEN YOU COME BACK YOU CAN TELL ME WHAT SIX PLUS SEVEN IS.

THANK YOU, DALE.

HEY, VIOLET, I'M HEADING HOME EARLY TO GET SOME SLEEP.

DO YOU WANT TO TAKE MY CAR?

I CAN GET SOMEONE TO TAKE ME TO YOUR PLACE LATER TO GET IT. THEN WE CAN GO TO THAT GALLERY OPENING. YOU'LL BE RESTED UP ENOUGH BY THE END OF THE DAY, RIGHT?

UH, YEAH-

I DON'T LIKE GALLERY OPENINGS. IF THIS IS MY LUCKY DAY, DON'T I DESERVE WHAT I WANT?

NO, I SHOULD GET A CAB. I'M GOING TO SLEEP STRAIGHT THROUGH MORNING.

I DON'T WANT TO GO OUT LATER.

I DIDN'T THINK TO CHECK THE LOTTERY . . .

I'LL DO IT LATER.

AND TO END ON A LIGHT NOTE, FIVE PEOPLE DREW THE WINNING NUMBERS FOR THE LATEST BIG JACKPOT.

CLICK

ONE OF THESE TICKETS WAS BOUGHT RIGHT HERE IN OUR TOWN! CONGRATULATIONS, WHOEVER YOU ARE!

HERE ARE THOSE WINNING NUMBERS AGAIN . . .

LOTTERY

A. 03 06 10 22 31 06
B. 01 03 06 09 25 05
C. 01 04 13 45 64 06
D. 04 19 23 25 49 18
E. 06 08 32 43 63 19

NO WAY . . .

I WON! I WON!

HEE HEE HEE HEE!

IT'S

LUC

I'M STILL NOT FEELING GREAT, DALE. I NEED TO TAKE THE DAY OFF.

SURE THING, SERG . . .

. . . REST UP.

STATE LOTTO

I WARNED HIM . . .

RIIIIING

HI, THIS IS THE CAR SHOP CALLING ABOUT YOUR SUV. WE'VE CHECKED OUT THE DAMAGE, AND IT LOOKS LIKE REPAIRS WILL COST ABOUT THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS.

LET ME CALL YOU BACK.

WELL, LUCKY BOY, I CAN CERTAINLY AFFORD THAT *NOW!*

BUT WHAT DO *YOU* THINK? REPAIR THE CAR OR GET SOMETHING FUN AND NEW?

YOU DESERVE GOOD THINGS!

HEH, I DON'T KNOW . . .

DAD ALWAYS SAYS NOT TO BUY A CAR FOR FLASH, ONLY FOR VALUE. OTHERWISE YOU PAY MORE THAN IT'S WORTH, IT'S A MAGNET FOR CAR THIEVES–

YOU DESERVE FLASH! BUY A SPORTS CAR! THE MORE EXPENSIVE, THE BETTER!

THAT WAS . . .

. . . *VERY* SPECIFIC. BUT . . .

I LIKE HOW YOU THINK, LUCKY BOY!

KROOM

HEE HEE!

MAKES MY OLD WATCH FEEL A LOT LESS IMPRESSIVE, THOUGH.

YOU DESERVE BLING!

IT'S YOUR LUCKY DAY

VERY IMPRESSIVE CHOICE, SIR. AND A STEAL IF I SAY SO MYSELF, FOR $37,000.

I'LL PAY CASH.

HEY, VIOLET. HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE DINNER AT THE HORIZON?

THE HORIZON?! THAT'S THE MOST EXPENSIVE RESTAURANT IN TOWN!

EEEE!! WHAT'S THE OCCASION?

I'LL TELL YOU WHEN I PICK YOU UP.

I THOUGHT YOUR SUV WAS STILL IN THE SHOP . . .

IT IS. I BOUGHT MYSELF A NEW RIDE. IT'S RED. YOU CAN'T MISS IT.

OKAAAY . . .

SO WHAT IS GOING ON, SERGIO? THAT *CAR.* THIS *DINNER.* PROJECT MANAGERS DON'T MAKE *THAT* MUCH MORE THAN SENIOR ARCHITECTS.

IMPRESSIVE, RIGHT? I WON THE *LOTTERY.*

WHAT?! THAT'S AMAZING! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?!

YOU SHOULD BUY A BOAT.

WE COULD GO OUT ON THE LAKE EVERY WEEKEND. OR MAYBE WE'LL JUST TAKE A TRIP AROUND THE WORLD. OH, WAIT. A CRUISE. WE SHOULD TAKE A CRUISE.

OR WE COULD GO-

SERGIO. YOU DIDN'T TELL ME ABOUT THAT NEW *WATCH!*

OH, YEAH. I JUST GOT IT THIS AFTERNOON. $37,000, BUT I DESERVE IT.

SO . . .

WHAT DID YOU GET ME?

UM . . .

. . . . . .

WHAT? YOU *DID* GET ME SOMETHING, RIGHT?

I, UH . . .

YOU GOT YOURSELF A NEW SPORTS CAR AND A $37,000 WATCH AND YOU DIDN'T GET ME *ANYTHING?!*

TAKE ME HOME RIGHT NOW.

SLAM

YOU'D *BETTER* HAVE SOMETHING FOR ME TOMORROW.

WHAT DO *YOU* THINK OF THE NEW WATCH?

YOU LOOK IMPRESSIVE! HEE HEE HEE!

THE NEXT DAY . . .

WHOA! NICE WHEELS. YOUR NEW JOB MUST PAY MORE THAN I THOUGHT IT DID.

CAN I TELL YOU A SECRET?

I WON THE LOTTERY.

WOW! GOOD FOR YOU.

BUT I GOTTA WARN YOU. DALE WAS ON A RAMPAGE YESTERDAY ABOUT HAVING TO PICK UP YOUR LOAD BECAUSE YOU WERE OUT SICK. THAT PROJECT YOU'RE ON IS KIND OF A MESS.

I'M NOT CRITICIZING. I COULDN'T DO WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING HALF AS WELL AS YOU HAVE.

BUT THE ***POWERS THAT BE*** AREN'T GOING TO BE HAPPY SEEING YOU LIVING THE HIGH LIFE WHILE YOUR WORK SUFFERS.

YOU'RE RIGHT. I NEED TO FIX THE MESS I MADE A COUPLE DAYS AGO AND GET TO WORK.

YAWN

I'M NOT OUT OF THE HOLE YET, BUT TODAY WAS GOOD PROGRESS.

VIOLET DIDN'T EVEN SAY HI TO ME ONCE TODAY.

OH WELL. AT LEAST I CAN ENJOY THE DRIVE HOME IN MY NEW-

-CAR?

WHERE'S MY CAR?!

SORRY YOU GOT YOUR CAR STOLEN THE FIRST FULL DAY YOU OWNED IT. THAT BITES THE BIG ONE.

AND YOU DON'T THINK I'LL GET IT BACK?

IT'S PROBABLY OUT OF THE STATE BY NOW. OR IT'S IN PARTS.

WELL, YOU'RE A RAY OF SUNSHINE.

HA.

SORRY. THIS JOB TENDS TO CREATE PESSIMISTS.

LUXURY APARTMENT

THANKS FOR THE RIDE ANYWAY.

HAVE A GOOD NIGHT.

YOU'RE THE GUY IN THE APARTMENT BELOW MINE, RIGHT?

YOU BETTER NOT WAKE ME UP AGAIN TONIGHT.

ME, WAKE *YOU* UP?

LOSER . . .

ANOTHER LATE NIGHT, SERGIO-

DO YOU ACTUALLY WANT SOMETHING FROM ME, MRS. BAILEY? OR DO YOU JUST WANT TO FORCE ME TO STAND IN THE HALLWAY AND TALK TO YOU FOR A HALF HOUR?

I'M SORRY, I . . . I DIDN'T REALIZE I WAS BOTHERING YOU.

WELL, YOU WERE. AND I WAS JUST BEING POLITE. BUT I DON'T FEEL LIKE BEING POLITE RIGHT NOW. IN FACT, I DON'T FEEL LIKE BEING *HERE* RIGHT NOW.

LEAVE ME *ALONE.*

SLAM

SO, WHAT DO I DO NOW?

EVERYONE'S WHO'S SOMEONE SHOULD HAVE A HOUSE.

HUH. YOU'RE SAYING I SHOULD MOVE?

CASH IS KING! GO FROM BAD TO GOOD!

YES! I CAN BUY A CHEAP FIXER-UPPER AND USE ALL THE SKILLS I'VE HONED AT THE FIRM TO TRANSFORM IT INTO SOMETHING *WORTHY.*

HEE HEE!

I'LL CALL A REAL ESTATE AGENT RIGHT AWAY.

TO GO PLACES, YOU GOTTA HAVE WHEELS.

RIGHT. I CAN'T GO LOOK AT REAL ESTATE WITHOUT A CAR. WHAT SHOULD I GET THIS TIME?

BIGGER AND BETTER!

YOU'RE RIGHT AS ALWAYS.

NOTHING LIKE AN ALL-NEW TRUCK TO MAKE COMING IN TO WORK ON SATURDAY FEEL LESS BAD.

AND THIS TIME THERE'S AN UPGRADED SECURITY SYSTEM, SO I **KNOW** IT'LL BE HERE WAITING.

AND A FULL SUSPENSION LIFT JUST FOR FUN.

I CAN'T BELIEVE I HAD TO FIGHT WITH THE DEALER OVER THAT.

"TIP HAZARD." BAH!

THIS BABY WOULDN'T LOOK NEARLY AS IMPRESSIVE WITHOUT THE LIFT!

I KNEW I'D FIND YOU HERE. ALL YOU EVER DO ANYMORE IS WORK.

OH, HI, VIOLET.

DON'T "OH, HI, VIOLET" ME.

I REALLY NEED TO GET TO WORK. WHAT'S *WRONG?*

WHAT'S WRONG?! DID YOU BUY ME A PRESENT YET?

I'VE BEEN REALLY BUSY.

NOT TOO BUSY TO STOP YOU FROM BUYING *THAT* MONSTROSITY.

IT'S YOUR LUCKY DAY

YOU COULD MANAGE THE TIME TO GO TO THE DEALERSHIP, BUT NOT POP INTO A JEWELRY STORE AND GET ME A LITTLE SOMETHING?

YOU'VE BEEN REALLY SELFISH LATELY, YOU KNOW THAT?

YOU DESERVE TO BE HAPPY.

WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?

IF IT'S BROKEN, FIX IT, OR GET RID OF IT.

SERGIO?! ANSWER ME! WHAT'S IN YOUR TRUCK?!

DO I WANT TO FIX THINGS WITH VIOLET?

NO. I DON'T.

WE SHOULD BREAK UP.

WH-WHAT?!

I SHOULD HAVE REALIZED IT WHEN I DIDN'T BUY YOU ANYTHING.

IF I LOVED YOU, AND REALLY WANTED TO BE WITH YOU, BUYING YOU SOMETHING SHOULD HAVE BEEN A NO-BRAINER. BUT I-

FORGET YOU, SERGIO. YOU'RE NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME ANYWAY. YOU'RE A FUNNY-LOOKING MAN, AND I'M TOO MUCH OF A CATCH FOR YOU.

GOOD ADVICE.

HEE HEE HEE!

SERGIO. GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE IN TODAY. I JUST DROPPED OFF A STACK OF PAPERWORK YOU NEED TO CORRECT.

THE TIME FOR SLOPPINESS IS OVER. I'M NOT HAPPY WITH ALL THE MISTAKES YOU NEED TO CORRECT.

YEAH, WELL, I'M NOT HAPPY, EITHER. I CAME IN ON A SATURDAY TO GET AHEAD, NOT REDO OLD WORK.

SORRY, DALE. I'LL GET RIGHT ON IT.

I'LL BE IN MY OFFICE IF YOU NEED ANYTHING. *PLEASE* TRY NOT TO NEED ANYTHING.

=SIGH=

WHAT AM I GOING TO DO ABOUT THIS JOB?

BETTER THINGS ARE ON THE HORIZON!

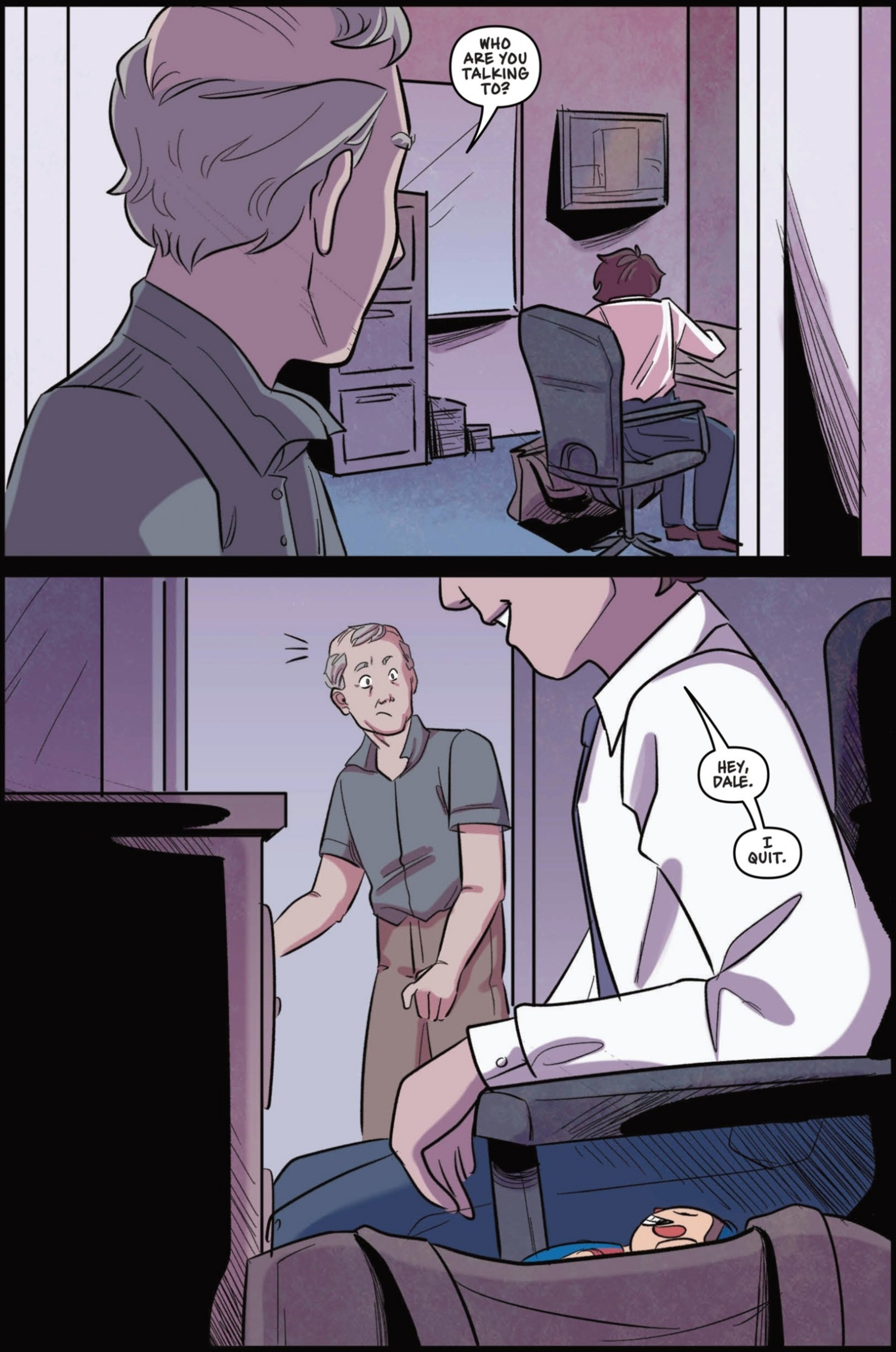
REALLY . . .

IT'S YOUR LUCKY DAY!

YOU DESERVE TO BE YOUR OWN BOSS. IT WOULD BE IMPRESSIVE!

DAD DOES ALWAYS SAY THIS COUNTRY RUNS ON THE BACKBONE OF ENTREPRENEURIALISM.

THIS WOULD BE THE ONLY WAY TO FINALLY MAKE HIM RESPECT ME.


WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?
HEY, DALE.
I QUIT.

I RECENTLY CAME INTO A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF MONEY, AND I WANT TO LEVERAGE IT INTO NOT JUST A HOME FOR ME, BUT A MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR DESIGN BUSINESS.

A PLACE TO SHOW OFF MY DESIGN AESTHETIC TO POTENTIAL CLIENTS, WHILE ALSO LIVING THERE.

OH, HOW EXCITING. I'D LOVE TO BE PART OF HELPING YOU BUILD A MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR BUSINESS.

AND I THINK YOUR DESIGN AESTHETIC WOULD BE PERFECT FOR RENOVATING SOMEPLACE LIKE THIS.

I DIDN'T KNOW YOU'D NOTICED MY DESIGN AESTHETIC.

OF COURSE, SERGIO. WE REALTORS TEND TO NOTICE WHEN A HOT NEW ARCHITECT IS ON THE RISE IN TOWN.

HEH.

OKAY. I WANT TO MAKE AN OFFER.

YOU DESERVE A GREAT GIRL WHO DOTES ON YOU.

IT'S YOUR ~~LUCK~~Y DAY

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

PRETTY IS GOOD.

WELL, AREN'T YOU A LITTLE CASANOVA. DIDN'T I JUST GET RID OF A GIRLFRIEND?

HEE HEE!

OKAY. NEXT TIME I SEE HER–

RIING

HI, CLAIRE!

SERGIO, GREAT NEWS! THEY ACCEPTED YOUR OFFER!

THAT'S GREAT! WANT TO GO OUT TO DINNER TO CELEBRATE?

HA! SURE!

IT'S YOUR LUCKY DAY

HEE HEE HEE!

I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU GOT ME FLOWERS, SERGIO . . .

ROSES SPEAK FROM THE HEART.

AND WHAT IS *THIS?*

THAT'S LUCKY BOY. HE'S . . . SORT OF LIKE A MASCOT.

ACTUALLY, I HAVEN'T TOLD ANYBODY ABOUT HIM. I'LL TELL YOU THE TRUTH.

I FOUND HIM A FEW DAYS AGO WHEN MY CAR BROKE DOWN IN THE RAIN. I THOUGHT HE WAS JUST A DOLL THAT HAD A COUPLE PHRASES ON A TAPE OR SOMETHING.

BUT WHEN I CALLED FOR A TOW TRUCK, HE TOLD ME TO BUY A LOTTERY TICKET.

AND I WON. SO NOW I KEEP HIM AROUND AND LISTEN TO WHAT HE HAS TO SAY.

I'M SURE YOU THINK I'M WEIRD NOW.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

I DON'T KNOW.

YOU'RE NOT CURIOUS?

YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE IT APART AND FIND OUT?

NO!

THE ROAD!

SORRY.

I GUESS I'M SENTIMENTAL ABOUT IT.

I UNDERSTAND, SERGIO.

PHEW

NO, I'M SORRY.

SOON . . .

ALL OF THIS CAN GO . . .

THANK YOU SO MUCH, SERGIO! I'M SO GLAD WE MET.

THIS BUDGET IS OFF FAR WORSE THAN I THOUGHT. WHY AM I SO BAD AT THE NUMBERS?

I SAW THIS SHIRT AND THOUGHT OF YOU!

OH, THANK YOU!

I'M RUNNING OUT OF FUNDS FAST. WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?

YOUR FATHER IS RICH! GET A LOAN.

I HAVE ENOUGH SHIRTS. IS SHE SAYING SHE DOESN'T LIKE HOW I DRESS?

ME TOO.

I'M GONNA NEED TO CHECK MY BANK BALANCE AFTER THAT MEAL . . .

NO, I DIDN'T MEAN THE PLUMBING! DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S GOING TO COST ME TO REPLACE THAT?

OF COURSE I DON'T MIND HAVING A PICNIC ON THE FLOOR OF YOUR PLACE!

WHY DOES THAT SOUNDS LIKE, "WHERE DO YOU GET OFF MAKING ME EAT OFF THE FLOOR, CHEAPSKATE?"

OOF. THAT'S NOT GONNA GO WELL . . .

I WISH I WAS TALLER SOMETIMES.

YOU COULD ALWAYS HAVE LIFTS PUT IN YOUR SHOES, SWEETIE.

WHY COULDN'T SHE JUST SAY, "DON'T BE SILLY, YOU'RE PLENTY TALL!"

TOOLS

YOU DESERVE THE GIRL OF YOUR DREAMS!

YOU'RE SAYING I SHOULD BREAK UP WITH CLAIRE?

HEE HEE!

TOO BAD I ALREADY COMMITTED TO BRINGING HER AROUND TO MEET MY PARENTS. FINALLY DATE A GIRL THEY'LL APPROVE OF AND THEN *THIS* . . .

YOU NEED YOUR FATHER'S MONEY!

IT'S

LUC

YEAH. I CAN'T MESS WITH THAT.

I'LL HAVE TO DUMP CLAIRE AFTER THE DINNER WITH MY PARENTS.

LOOK AT YOU! BEAUTIFUL! CAN I GET YOU ANYTHING? I LOVE YOUR MAKEUP. AND YOUR HAIR! SERGIO, YOU HAVE VERY GOOD TASTE!

HA HA, THANK YOU.

SHE'S NOT ROYALTY, MAMA.

I'M JUST BEING FRIENDLY! AND I THINK SHE'LL BE THE PERFECT DATE TO IMPRESS ALL YOUR OLD FRIENDS AT YOUR UPCOMING HIGH SCHOOL REUNION.

OH YEAH. TEN YEARS. I FORGOT THAT WAS COMING UP . . .

TEN YEARS SINCE I'VE SEEN SOPHIA MANCHESTER.

SERGIO, DON'T YOU KNOW ALL WOMEN WANT TO BE TREATED LIKE ROYALTY?

FINE. THEN I'M GOING TO LEAVE YOU REGAL LADIES HERE. I NEED TO TALK TO PAPA.

I SAW YOUR NEW GIRL FROM HERE WHEN YOU PULLED INTO THE DRIVEWAY.

SHE'S A PRIZE.

HM.

BUT YOU'RE NOT HERE TO TALK ABOUT HER. SO WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND, SON?

I NEED A LOAN.

I THOUGHT YOU WON ALL THAT MONEY.

IT'S SPENT.

PAPA, YOU ALWAYS SAY YOU HAVE TO SPEND MONEY TO MAKE MONEY. AND THAT'S WHAT I'M DOING.

I HAVE TO CREATE A MIND-BLOWING RENOVATION FOR MY NEW BUSINESS. I NEED TO CREATE BUZZ TO GET CLIENTS.

IF YOU COULD LOAN ME JUST A COUPLE HUNDRED THOUSAND, I CAN CREATE WHAT I WANT, MY BUSINESS WILL BE OFF, AND I CAN PAY YOU BACK REALLY FAST.

OKAY.

REALLY?

I'LL LOAN YOU THE MONEY, BUT IF YOU CAN'T PAY IT BACK IN *SIX MONTHS*, YOU'LL PAY IT BACK IN LABOR.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

YOU'LL HAVE TO COME DRIVE A TRUCK FOR ME.

I'LL BE ABLE TO PAY IT OFF BY THEN.

SO WHY DOES IT BOTHER ME?

DON'T YOU WANT TO TRY SOME OF THE BRUSSELS SPROUTS? THEY'RE REALLY GOOD.

I'M GOOD, THANKS.

SERGIO DOESN'T LIKE BRUSSELS SPROUTS, DEAR.

HE'S LIKE HIS FATHER.

THEY JUST DON'T APPRECIATE GOOD VEGETABLES.

YOUR PARENTS ARE REALLY NICE . . .

I DON'T WANT TO DATE ANYMORE.

WHAT?

I'M TIRED OF YOU TRYING TO FIX ME. NEW SHIRTS. SHOES WITH LIFTS. EAT *BRUSSELS SPROUTS.*

WOW. YOU'RE *RIDICULOUS.* I DON'T KNOW WHERE THIS IS COMING FROM. I'M GLAD I FOUND OUT SOONER THAN LATER.

I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN YOU WERE A WEIRDO WHEN YOU TOLD ME ABOUT YOUR LITTLE GURU TOY.

PUT HIM DOWN!

SERGIO, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

SCREEEEEEE

AAAAAA!

BANG

KRUNCH

UGH.

NFF . . .

ARE YOU OKAY?

WE'RE OKAY!

SPEAK FOR YOURSELF!

YOU'RE GOING TO PAY FOR THIS.

SOON ENOUGH . . .

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YOU QUIT? I'VE PAID YOU WELL! THE JOB ISN'T OVER!

THIS IS A SMALL INDUSTRY, SERGIO. WE HEARD ALL ABOUT WHAT YOU DID TO CLAIRE. GOOD LUCK FINDING ANOTHER CONTRACTOR.

AND THIS MUST BE THE LAWSUIT CLAIRE PROMISED.

YOU'VE BEEN SERVED.

A TEMPORARY SETBACK.

IT'LL ALL COME TOGETHER. AND BESIDES, THAT HIGH SCHOOL REUNION IS COMING UP.

I'M MORE IMPRESSIVE THAN EVER, AND THIS WILL FINALLY BE MY CHANCE TO PROVE MYSELF TO SOPHIA.

FIVE DAYS TILL THE REUNION.

FOUR DAYS TILL THE REUNION.

THREE DAYS TILL THE REUNION.

TWO DAYS TILL THE REUNION.

ONE DAY TILL THE REUNION.

WHAT SHOULD I DO TO GET READY? I HAVE THE RIGHT CLOTHES. THIS PLACE IS NEARLY PERFECT. BUT I WANT TO KNOCK SOPHIA'S SOCKS OFF!

REUNION DAY.

BE THE BEST TO GET THE BEST.

RIGHT. I KNOW I'M THE BEST ARCHITECT, AND I'M WELL ON MY WAY TO HAVING THE BEST BUSINESS.

BUT I'M FEELING A LITTLE SELF CONSCIOUS ABOUT HOW I LOOK. WITH ALL THE WORK, I HAVEN'T HAD TIME FOR THE BEST DIET OR EXERCISE LATELY . . .

TRIM THE FAT!

I WOULD LOVE TO, BUT I DON'T HAVE TIME TO HIT THE GYM OR MEAL PLAN. EVEN IF I DID, THE REUNION IS TONIGHT–

TRIM THE FAT.

ARE YOU SAYING WHAT I THINK YOU'RE SAYING?

TRIM THE FAT.

HA, I MEAN, SURE, I GUESS TECHNICALLY I COULD, BUT . . .

I DON'T EXACTLY HAVE THE SAME LEVEL, OF TRAINING AS, SAY, A PLASTIC SURGEON.

YOU'RE THE BEST!

I MEAN, I *GUESS* I ALREADY *HAVE* BEEN TRUSTING MY HANDS AND TOOLS WITH MY LIFE . . .

AND I'M DOING A PRETTY GREAT JOB OF IT! HOW HARD COULD A LITTLE FAT REMOVAL BE?

HA HA HA HA HA!

HEE HEE HEE!

WHAT ELSE? MY NOSE IS A LITTLE LONG.

CUT TO FIT. THAT'S THE RULE.

HA HA! OF COURSE! BUT WHAT ABOUT MY LIPS? THEY'RE TOO THICK.

WOOD CARVERS ARE ARTISTS.

ANOTHER GOOD POINT. I'M A MASTER OF RESHAPING WOOD! I CAN RESHAPE *ANYTHING!*

EYELIDS COVER EYES. HEE HEE!

NO PROBLEM. FIX UP THESE BEADY BIRD EYES . . .



THAT NIGHT.

NOW, THIS IS NICE. THE PERFECT BACKDROP FOR MY NEW, IMPRESSIVE LOOK.

I'M DEFINITELY GOING TO DROP SOME JAWS TONIGHT.

HUH. WHAT'S WRONG WITH THEM?

WHY DOES EVERYONE SEEM SO UPSET? IS THERE SOMETHING TERRIBLE BEHIND ME?

WAIT, WHAT'S THAT . . .

NO WONDER EVERYONE IS HORRIFIED! WHAT A MESS! THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE A CLASSY HOTEL!

NEVER MIND. IT'S NOT IMPORTANT.

WHERE IS SOPHIA . . .

HEE HEE HEE!

THE CLIFFS

CAREFUL WITH THE SIPPY CUP, BUDDY . . .

IF YOU KEEP MAKING ME PICK IT UP EVERY 30 SECONDS, WE'RE GOING TO BE LATE . . .

PLAY PHONE!

HOW TO HANDLE THE TODDLER YEARS

IT'S NOT TIME FOR YOU TO PLAY WITH DADDY'S PHONE—

WAAAAA!

PLAY PHONE!

WAK

NO, IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO EAT YOUR BREAKFAST AND GET READY FOR DAY CARE.

NANA!

YES, TIME TO EAT YOUR BANANA.

I'D NEVER PLANNED TO BE A SINGLE PARENT, BUT I DON'T HAVE A CHOICE NOW THAT ANNA IS GONE.

HOMF

YOU HAVING FUN, TYLER?

CLIFFSIDE ESTATES

PLAY PHONE.

KID,
I'M ALL YOU
HAVE IN THIS
WORLD.

AND I
DON'T
THINK I'M
ENOUGH.

EVERY DAY. JUST KEEP IT DOWN, EVERY DAY.

WE'RE JUST ABOUT AT DAYCARE, BUDDY!

YAAAY!

DAY CARE

INITRADE

HOW WAS YOUR WEEKEND?

NOT BAD, DID SOME GRILLING . . .

HA HA HA, NO WAY!

HA HA HA HA HA!

HEY, ROBERT.

AH!

OH. HEY, JESS.

HEY, YOURSELF. SORRY FOR THE SCARE.

IT'S OKAY. UH, I SHOULD GET BACK TO WORK.

HOLD ON, ROBERT. I HAVE SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.

!

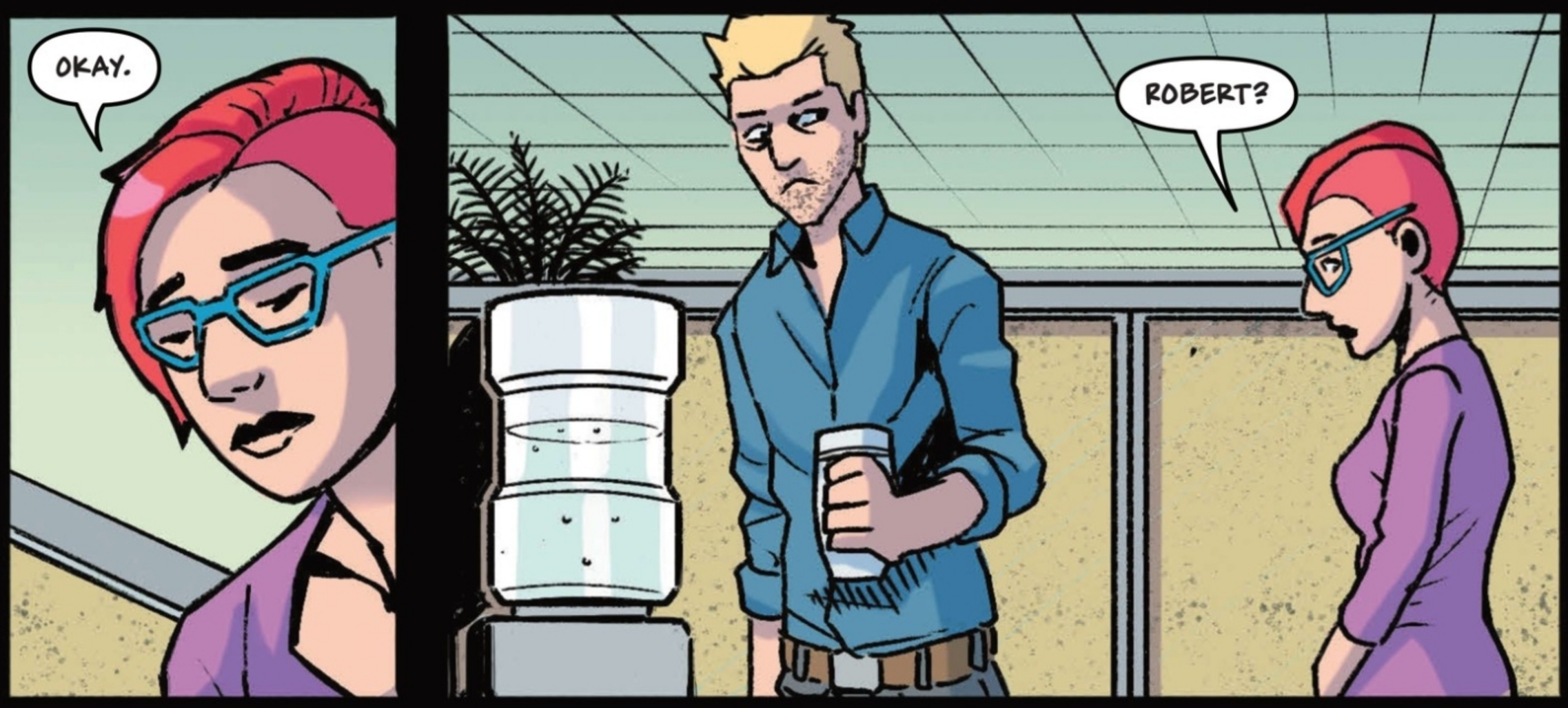
YOU DO?

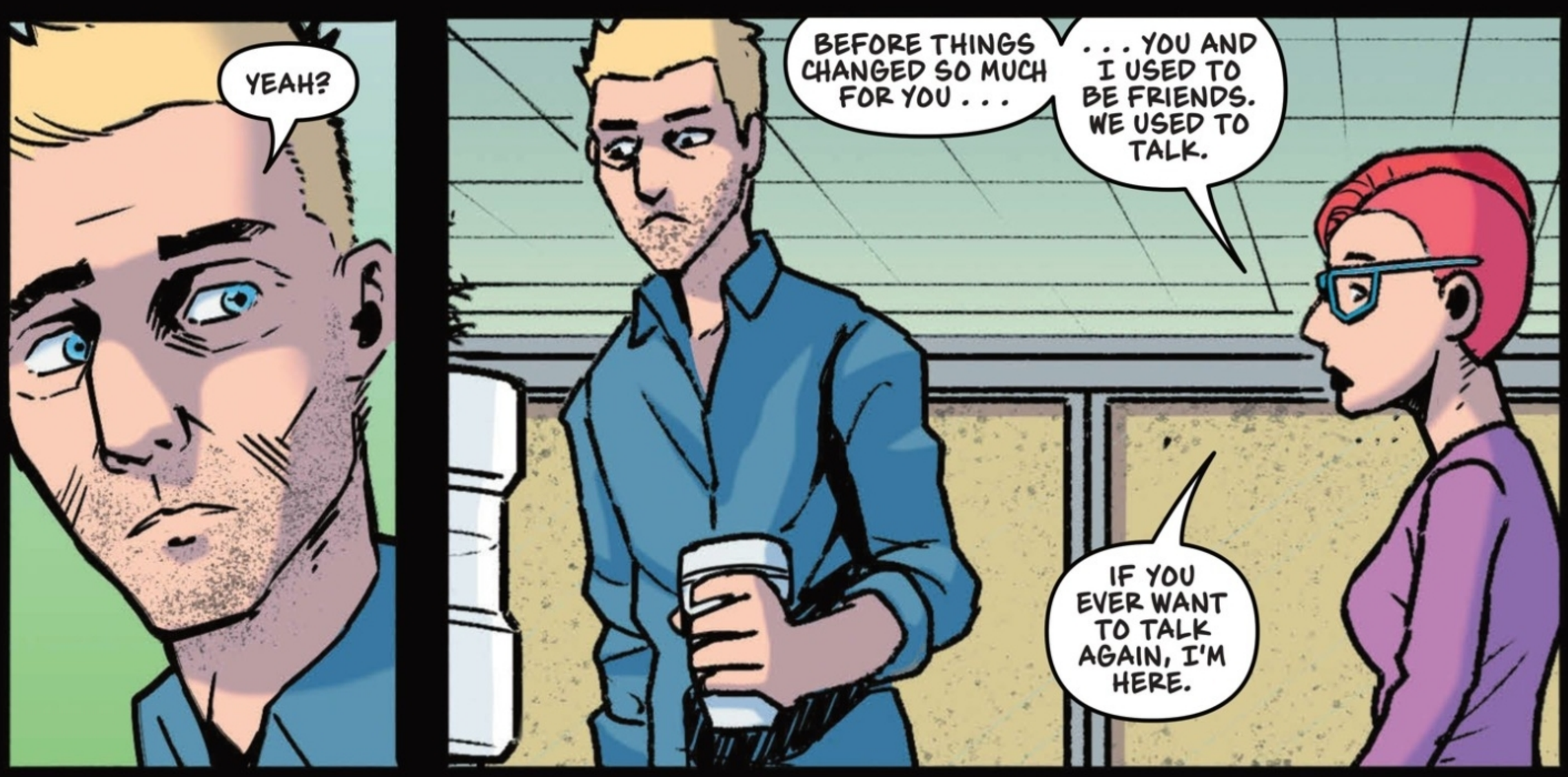
YEAH, I COULDN'T HELP BUT NOTICE YOU EATING YOUR SAD LITTLE SANDWICH OVER THERE.

AND I WAS THINKING, I KNOW YOU CAN'T GO OUT AFTER WORK BECAUSE YOU'VE GOT A KIDDO TO FETCH.

BUT A LOT OF US GO OUT FOR HALF-PRICE SUSHI FOR LUNCH ON WEDNESDAYS. YOU SHOULD COME ALONG!


YEAH, MAYBE I'LL JOIN YOU SOMETIME. THANKS FOR INVITING ME.


OKAY.
ROBERT?


YEAH?
BEFORE THINGS CHANGED SO MUCH FOR YOU . . .
. . . YOU AND I USED TO BE FRIENDS. WE USED TO TALK.
IF YOU EVER WANT TO TALK AGAIN, I'M HERE.

JESS–

I'M A SINGLE PARENT, TOO. NOT FOR THE SAME REASON *YOU* ARE . . .

. . . BUT I BET WE STILL GO THROUGH A LOT OF THE SAME STUFF. TALKING ABOUT SOME OF IT MIGHT BE GOOD FOR OUR SANITY. WHAT'S LEFT OF IT.

HEH. YEAH, I'M DOWN TO CRUMBS MYSELF.

SEE?! I WORRY ABOUT YOU! OUT BY THE CLIFFS . . . KIND OF A CREEPY PLACE TO LIVE ALONE.

OH, JUST BECAUSE EVERYONE WHO EVER DECIDED TO END THINGS IN THIS TOWN DID IT BY JUMPING OFF A LEDGE NEAR MY BACKYARD?

WELL . . .

IT'S THAT KIND OF LOCAL TALK THAT MADE MY HOUSE AFFORDABLE IN THE FIRST PLACE.

shrug

shrug

HA HA, YIKES! PRETTY GRIM HUMOR, ROBERT.

I CAN'T BELIEVE I HAVE *ANY* HUMOR IN ME.

OKAY, SINCE YOU'RE OUT OF PRACTICE TALKING TO GROWN-UPS, YOU GET A FREE PASS TODAY. BUT NEXT WEEK IS *MANDATORY SUSHI!*

AFTER WORK . . .

HAPES!
LEASE AND
HANK YOU!

HELLO, MS. LAUREN. HOW WAS TYLER TODAY?

EN

PLEASE AND THANK YOU!

HE WAS A HAPPY BOY FOR MOST OF THE DAY . . .

ALTHOUGH THERE IS ONE LITTLE THING I SHOULD TELL YOU ABOUT.

THAT CAN'T BE GOOD.

I ASKED THE KIDS TO DRAW PICTURES OF THEIR FAMILIES AND TALK ABOUT THEM.

AH.

ANOTHER BOY NOTICED TYLER DIDN'T HAVE A MOM IN HIS PICTURE AND ASKED HIM ABOUT IT. TYLER GOT A LITTLE UPSET, I THINK BECAUSE SOMEONE POINTED OUT THAT HIS FAMILY PORTRAIT WAS DIFFERENT.

I TOLD THE CLASS THAT NOT ALL KIDS HAVE A MOMMY AND DADDY...

...THAT THERE ARE DIFFERENT KINDS OF FAMILIES, AND THEY ALL MOVED ON PRETTY QUICKLY.

I GUESS I'VE BEEN PUTTING OFF TALKING TO TYLER ABOUT IT FOR TOO LONG...

DADDY!

SEE? A HAPPY BOY.

ONLY BECAUSE HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND YET WHAT HE'S MISSING...

WHAT WAS THAT?

NOTHING. THANK YOU AGAIN, MS. LAUREN.

PHARMACY

MARKET

WE JUST NEED TO MAKE A LITTLE STOP ON THE WAY HOME. OKAY, BUDDY?

MILK! DOOS!

THAT'S RIGHT. AND YOU CAN PICK WHAT KIND OF JUICE YOU WANT.

FWEDDY!

I DON'T THINK I KNOW THAT FLAVOR . . .

TAG-ALONG FREDDY

FWEDDY! FWEDDY!

OH . . . YOU WANT TO LOOK AT ONE OF THE FREDDIES?

YEAH! FWEDDY!

WUV.

NEW

WELL, SHOOT. IT'S HARD TO ARGUE WITH "WUV."

BUY? MINE?

LET ME AT LEAST SEE IF YOU'RE OLD ENOUGH FOR IT . . .

Tag-Along Freddy is a kid's and parents' best pal. Freddy goes where your little one goes and sends you live updates on your tag-along time wristwatch (wristwatch included), so you'll know your little one is happy and safe. You may have to be out of sight sometimes, but Tag-Along Freddy is the **bear who is always there!**

WOW.

THAT MIGHT ACTUALLY BE *EXACTLY* WHAT BOTH OF US NEED RIGHT NOW.

REMEMBER THAT TIME I LEFT YOU FOR THIRTY SECONDS TO STIR THE MAC AND CHEESE AND CAME BACK TO FIND YOU SCALING THE BOOKCASE LIKE KING KONG?

MAYBE FREDDY WILL TELL ME NEXT TIME YOU TRY SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

FWEDDY!

WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE FREDDY HOME WITH YOU?

YEAH, DADDY! FANK YOU!

NEW

YOU'RE WELCOME, BUDDY. AND I'M LOVING THESE GOOD MANNERS.

SEEMS LIKE FREDDY'S ALREADY DOING GREAT WORK.

WHY DON'T YOU PLAY WITH FREDDY WHILE I GET OUR SUPPER STARTED?

FWEDDY!

Pantette PASTA

DING

MESSAGE FROM FREDDY: IT'S ALL GOOD. I'M PLAYING WITH MY BEST BUDDY!

ARE YOU READY FOR SUPPER? I KNOW YOU'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF READING, BUT—

OKAY, DADDY!

HUH. EXPECTED AT LEAST A LITTLE ARGUMENT THERE.

FWEDDY PLATE, TOO.

OKAY, BUT HE HAS TO EAT PRETEND SPAGHETTI, OR HE'LL GET ALL MESSY.

PWETEND SKETTI.

FREDDY SPAGHETTI!

HA HA HA, FWEDDY SKETTI!

HA HA HA . . . AH, YOU'RE AN EASY AUDIENCE, TYLER.

YOU LOOK READY FOR BATH TIME, BUD.

FWEDDY BAFF, TOO?

FREDDY CAN'T GET WET, BUT HE CAN COME ALONG.

OKAY, DADDY.

FWEDDY, DIS MY BLUE TWUCK. FWEDDY, DIS MY CHOO-CHOO TWAIN . . .

YOU WANT ME TO READ YOU A BOOK BEFORE BED, BUDDY?

YES! THE SILLY CHICKEN.

ON A VERY SERIOUS FARM, FULL OF VERY SERIOUS ANIMALS, THERE LIVED . . .

A SILLY CHICKEN!

HEEE HEE HEE YAAAY!

ALL THE OTHER CHICKENS WOULD EAT THEIR CORN, AND LAY THEIR EGGS, BUT THE SILLY CHICKEN . . .

. . . ONLY LIKED TO DO SILLY THINGS-

I'M SWEEPY, DADDY.

OH! UH, OKAY.

7:45

THIS USUALLY TAKES TWICE AS LONG!

WELL, NO ARGUMENTS FROM ME.

GOOD NIGHT, BUDDY. I LOVE YOU.

I CAN'T REMEMBER THE LAST TIME I HAD AN ENTIRE EVENING TO MYSELF.

MAYBE I SHOULD MAKE SURE-

LO CHIPS

BIZZ

A MESSAGE FROM FREDDY: FAST ASLEEP.

THANK YOU, FREDDY.

CLICK

WE DON'T KNOW IF FREDDY WILL BE ALLOWED AT DAY CARE, BUDDY. SO IF I HAVE TO TAKE HIM WITH ME, YOU HAVE TO PROMISE TO BE GOOD, AND YOU'LL SEE HIM AGAIN LATER-

FWEDDY COMES, TOO.

...

WHO'S YOUR FRIEND, TYLER?

FWEDDY!

I KNOW YOU USUALLY DISCOURAGE TOYS FROM HOME, BUT WE JUST GOT THE BEAR YESTERDAY, AND HE ABSOLUTELY REFUSES TO PART WITH IT.

I THINK WE CAN MAKE AN EXCEPTION IN THIS CASE.

YOU'RE A LIFE SAVER.

IT'S NOT SO BAD CATCHING A BREAK OR TWO AS THE "SAD BUT WELL-MEANING SINGLE DAD."

JANUARY

VRRRT

MESSY FUN WITH FINGER PAINTS!

THANK YOU

VRRRT

YUM! LUNCHTIME!

VRRRT

THAT WAS THE LAST SAD SANDWICH, I SWEAR! MANDATORY SUSHI NEXT WEEK!

WOW, OKAY! WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU?

IT'S THIS TOY I GOT TYLER. I CAN'T BELIEVE SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AS A DOLL HAS ME FEELING SO MUCH BETTER BUT . . .

NAP TIME! HE'S SNOOZING AWAY!

IT LETS ME KNOW WHAT TYLER'S UP TO DURING THE DAY. IT MAKES ME FEEL A LITTLE LESS ISOLATED, LIKE MORE OF A FAMILY.

THAT'S GREAT.

THE NEXT DAY . . .

481

IT'S A BEAUTIFUL MORNING, BUDDY! HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT PLAYING OUTSIDE IN YOUR SANDBOX?

YEAH! SANDBOX! FWEDDY PLAY, TOO.

OKAY, BUT HE CAN'T GET IN THE SANDBOX.

THE SAND WOULD BE BAD FOR HIS FUR.

THAT'S THE DEAL, RIGHT, FREDDY?

YOU GIVE ME UPDATES ON TYLER'S WELL-BEING, AND I KEEP HIM FROM DUNKING YOU IN WATER, SMEARING YOU WITH SPAGHETTI SAUCE, OR COATING YOU IN SAND?

FWEDDY, WATCH ME DIG.

RIIIING

CRAP, LEFT MY PHONE INSIDE . . .

HEY, BUDDY, I'M GONNA GO GET THE PHONE. YOU STAY IN THE SANDBOX, OKAY?

OKAY, DADDY.

I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.

Unknown

HELLO?

...

HELLO?

:CLICK:
HELLO, I'M CALLING ABOUT YOUR HOME-OWNER'S INSURANCE? OUR RECORDS SHOW THAT IT'S OUT-OF-DATE, AND YOU—

DOOT

JUST A SPAM CALL—

VROOOOM

TYLER?

TYLER?!

TYLER!

THE GATE.

TYLER?!

IT WAS CLOSED BEFORE, WASN'T IT? OR MAYBE IT WASN'T . . .

TYLER!

VRRRT

GONE?
GONE?!

GONE.

HOW IS THAT SUPPOSED TO HELP ME?!

TYYYYLLEEEEERR!!!

ROBERT? WHAT'S WRONG?

HAVE YOU SEEN TYLER?!

NO . . .

I HAVE TO CALL THE POLICE.

"THE FRONT GATE WAS OPEN WHEN I CAME BACK. I'M PRETTY SURE IT WAS CLOSED BEFORE. AND I SAW A WHITE VAN ON THE STREET . . . "

DID YOU GET THE LICENSE PLATE NUMBER?

NO. IT DROVE AWAY TOO FAST. I'M SORRY.

THAT'S OKAY. I KNOW THIS IS UPSETTING. DOES YOUR SON'S MOTHER LIVE WITH YOU?

NO. SHE DIED IN CHILDBIRTH HAVING TYLER.

I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT. COULD YOU GIVE US A PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF YOUR SON?

H-HERE- I CAN SEND YOU A PICTURE OF H- . . . OF H- . . . OF HIM-

POLICE

SIR, WHEN A CHILD THIS YOUNG IS MISSING, WE DON'T TAKE IT LIGHTLY. WE'LL SCOUR THE ENTIRE AREA, GET ANY INFO WE CAN ON THAT VAN. KEEP YOUR PHONE CLOSE BY.

OH GOD . . .

HOURS LATER . . .

VRRRRT

WHY DON'T YOU GO TO THE CLIFFS?

I WORRY ABOUT YOU! OUT BY THE CLIFFS . . . KIND OF A CREEPY PLACE TO LIVE ALONE.

OH, JUST BECAUSE EVERYONE WHO EVER DECIDED TO END THINGS IN THIS TOWN DID IT BY JUMPING OFF A LEDGE NEAR MY BACKYARD?

THE *CLIFFS?* ARE YOU SUGGESTING I . . .

I'VE BEEN BARELY HANGING ON ALREADY WITHOUT ANNA. IF TYLER'S GONE, TOO, THEN . . .

WHAT REASON DO I HAVE?

WHY SHOULD I LIVE? MAYBE IT'S RIGHT . . .

STOP.

HE HASN'T EVEN BEEN MISSING FOR A FULL EIGHT HOURS.

IF- *WHEN* THEY FIND TYLER, I HAVE TO BE THERE FOR HIM.

AND THEN I'LL JUST HAVE TO DO BETTER. BE A BETTER DAD.

I'M ALL HE HAS.

RIIING

HELLO?!

MR. STANTON? THIS IS DETECTIVE RAMIREZ—

DID YOU FIND HIM?

NOT YET, SIR, BUT I HAVE SOMETHING THAT COULD HELP. WE HAVE A DOG WITH A TREMENDOUS TRACK RECORD FOR FINDING MISSING PERSONS.

IS THERE ANY OF YOUR SON'S CLOTHING THE DOG COULD SNIFF? MAYBE AN UNWASHED SHIRT?

YES, OF COURSE.

I'M ALWAYS BEHIND ON THE LAUNDRY. HEH, IF ONE OF MY MANY FAILINGS AS A FATHER COULD ACTUALLY HELP—

MR. STANTON, PLEASE. DON'T BE SO HARD ON YOURSELF. THIS IS ALL HARD ENOUGH.

I'LL COME BY FOR THAT SHIRT.

DOOT DOOT DOOT

. . .

OKAY.

VRRRT

WHY DONT YOU GO TO THE CLIFFS?

SLAM

YOU THINK I'M A BAD PARENT? YOU THINK THIS IS MY FAULT?

YOU THINK I SHOULD JUST DIE ALREADY?!

WELL, WHERE WERE YOU?!

WHERE WERE Y—

POLICE

P017

SERVE AND PROTECT

911

DETECTIVE RAMIREZ! I HAVE THAT SHIRT FOR YOU.

THANK YOU. WE'LL GET THE DOG GOING RIGHT AWAY. I PROMISE WE'RE DOING EVERYTHING WE CAN TO FIND YOUR LITTLE BOY.

YOU REALLY SHOULD TRY TO GET SOME REST, OKAY?

VRRRRT

WHY DON'T YOU GO TO THE CLIFFS?


225/75 R18
AIR
KRUNCH






KRUNCH


AIR
TEMP




KRUNCH



NOW THAT I DON'T HAVE A SADISTIC TOY TELLING ME TO *KILL MYSELF*, MAYBE I CAN GET SOME *SLEEP*.

VRRRT

VRRRT

VRRRT

WHY DON'T YOU GO TO THE CLIFFS?

NOOOOOOOO!

NO . . . NO . . . NO . . .

:SOB:

THIS IS *IMPOSSIBLE.* THAT *BEAR* . . .

WE THOUGHT IT WAS CUTE . . . FRIENDLY . . .

IT WAS A *LIE.* I BROUGHT THAT . . . *THING* INTO THIS HOUSE, AND THEN TYLER *DISAPPEARED.*

AND NOW IT WANTS *ME* TO DIE, TOO.

RILLING!

YES?!

MR. STANTON, THIS IS DETECTIVE RAMIREZ. ARE YOU OKAY?

DID YOU FIND HIM?

NOT YET, BUT I WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW THE DOG HAS HIS SCENT AND IS SEARCHING.

IS THERE ANYTHING I SHOULD BE DOING?

PRAY, IF YOU'RE THE PRAYING SORT. I'LL CALL AGAIN IN THE MORNING.

BEEP

VRRRT

NO.

STOP IT. I WON'T LOOK.

VRRRT

VRRRT

VRRRT

VRRRT

BUT IF THERE'S EVEN A CHANCE . . .

AFTER ALL, IT *USED* TO BE SO *HELPFUL*. AND TYLER *LOVED* IT . . .

WHY DON'T YOU GO TO THE CLIFFS?

NOOOO!

I'M NOT READY TO DIE YET. I CAN'T GIVE UP ON TYLER . . .

I HAVE TO GET *RID* OF *YOU* FOR *GOOD.*

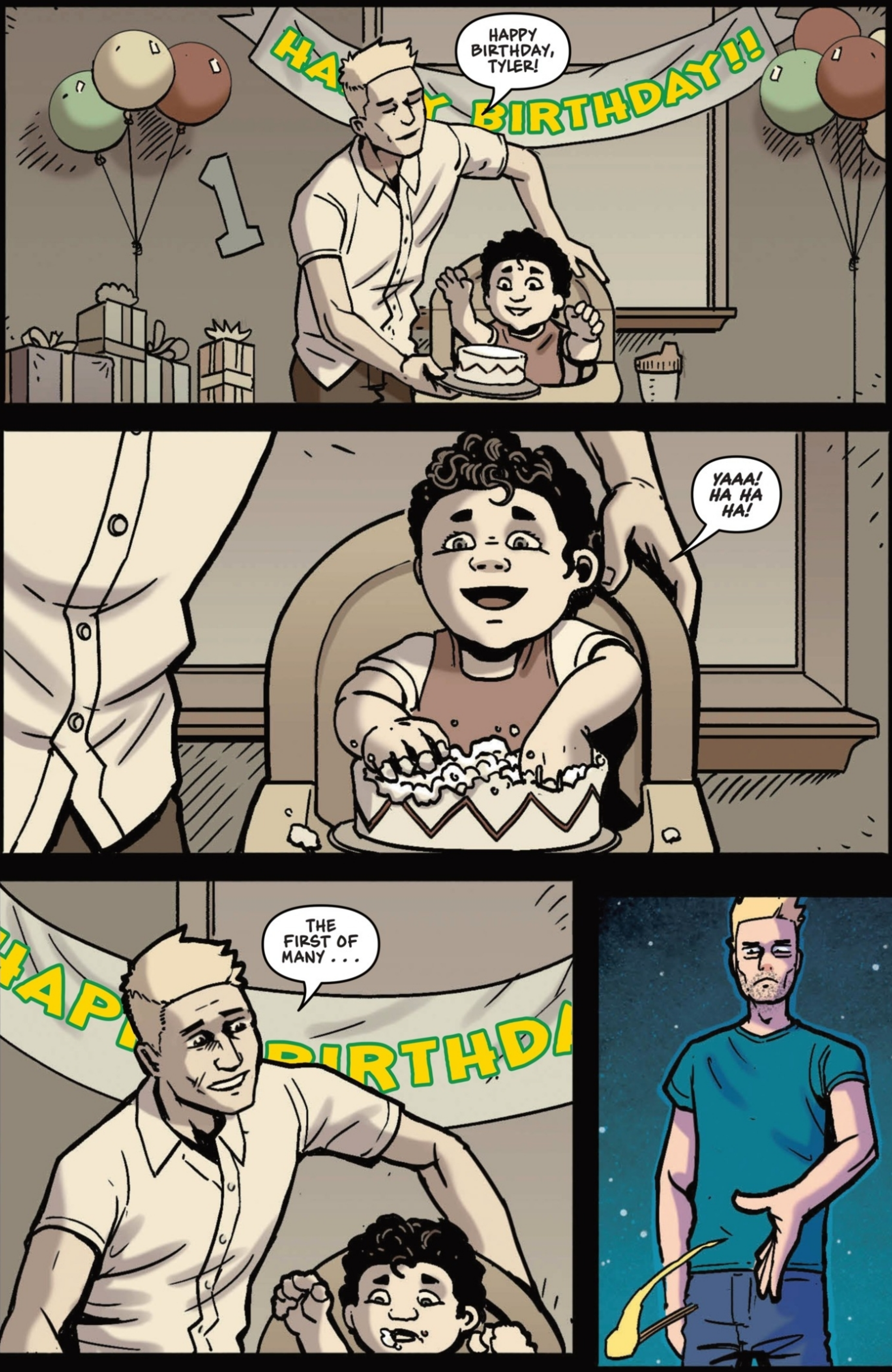
I WON'T LET YOU DRIVE ME *INSANE.* I HAVE TO STAY *STRONG.* STAY STRONG FOR WHEN TYLER COMES *BACK.*

OOPS. WE GOT SOME SAND IN YOUR FUR, FREDDY!

PLOP

I GUESS THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DON'T KEEP UP YOUR END OF THE BARGAIN.

SKRTCH

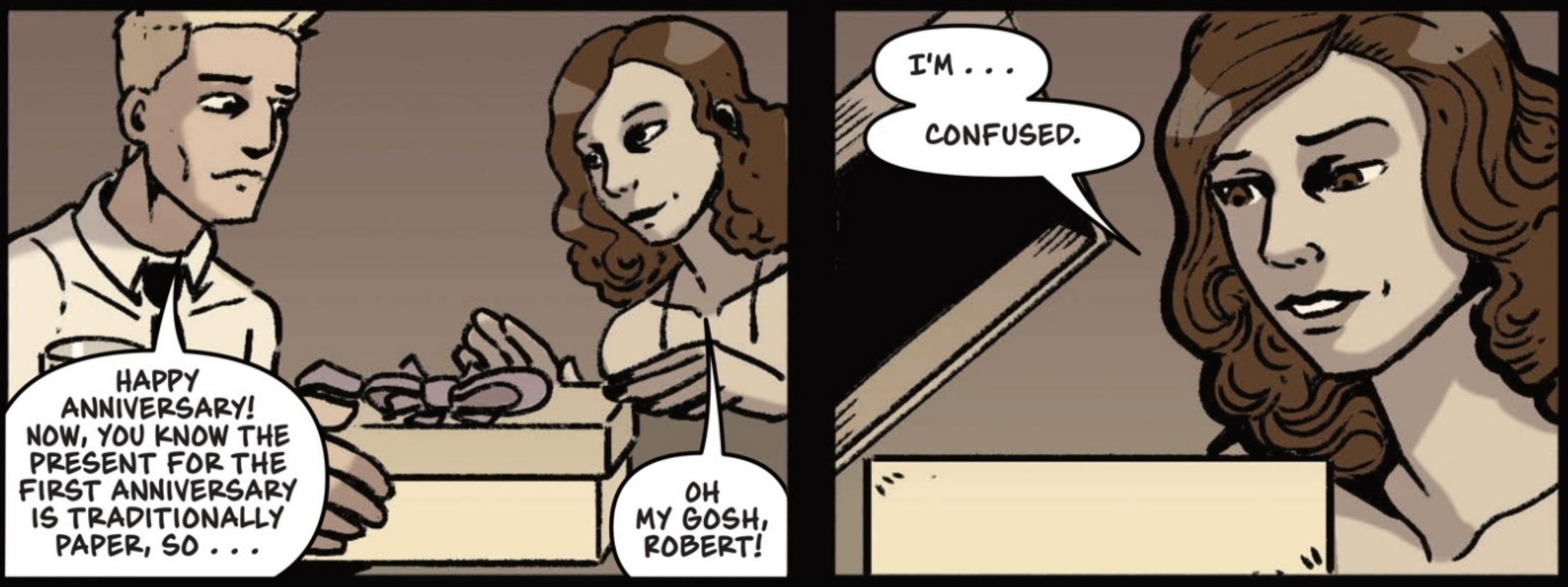

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!
HAPPY BIRTHDAY, TYLER!
1
YAAA! HA HA HA!
THE FIRST OF MANY . . .



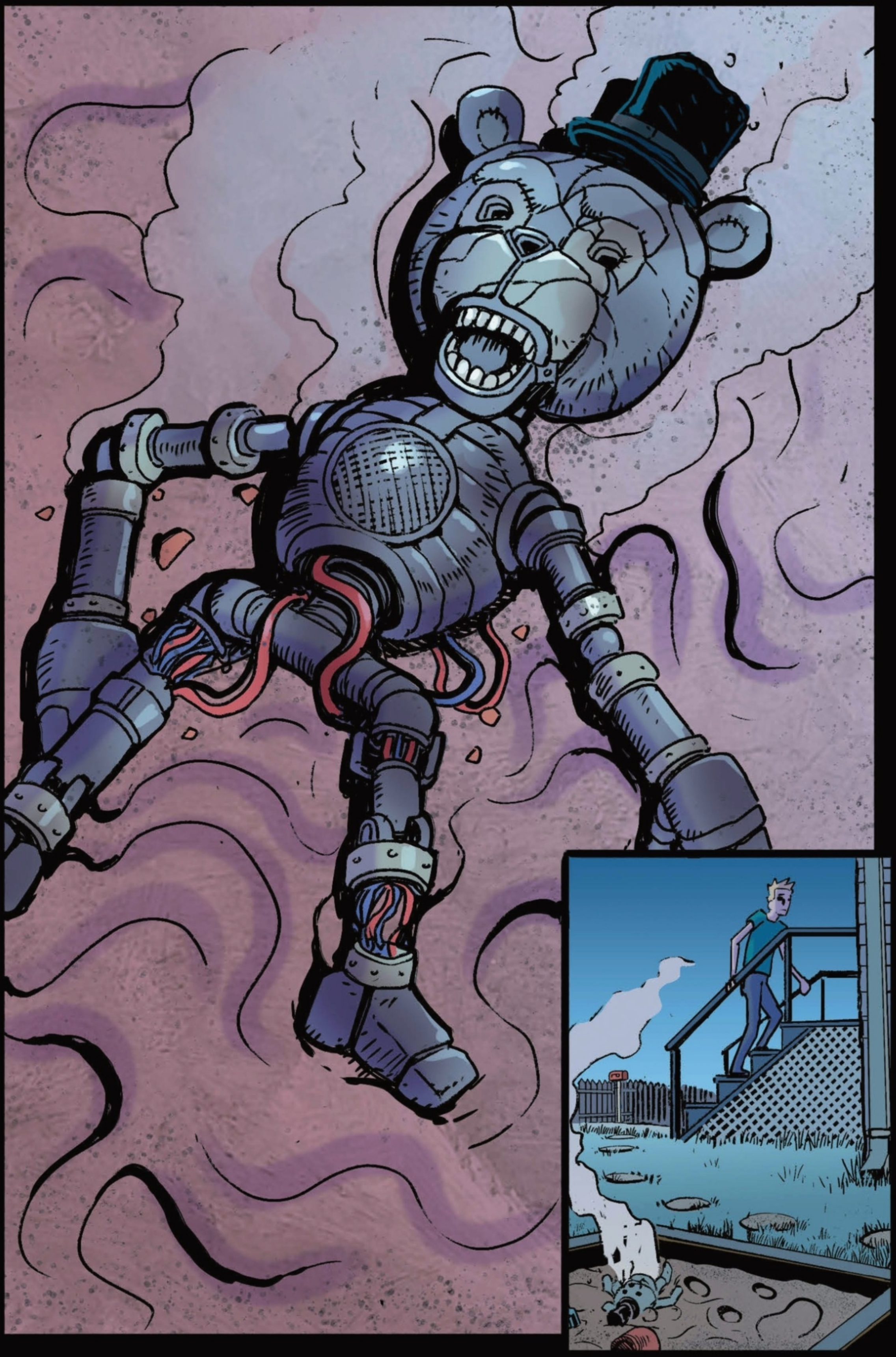





184
Anniversary
DUN
MIF


HAPPY ANNIVERSARY! NOW, YOU KNOW THE PRESENT FOR THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY IS TRADITIONALLY PAPER, SO . . .
OH MY GOSH, ROBERT!
I'M . . .
CONFUSED.


ONE HUNDRED PAPER CRANES. ONE FOR EVERY YEAR OF HAPPINESS WE'LL HAVE TOGETHER.
YOU'RE AMAZING. I LOVE YOU.



CIAO!

VRRRT
VRRRT
VRRRT
VRRRT

VRRRT
VRRRT

VRRRT
VRRRT
VRRRT
VRRRT

VRRRT
VRRRT
VRRRT

WHY DONT YOU GO TO THE CLIFFS?

KLAK

FINE . . .

". . . WE'LL GO TO THE CLIFFS TOGETHER."

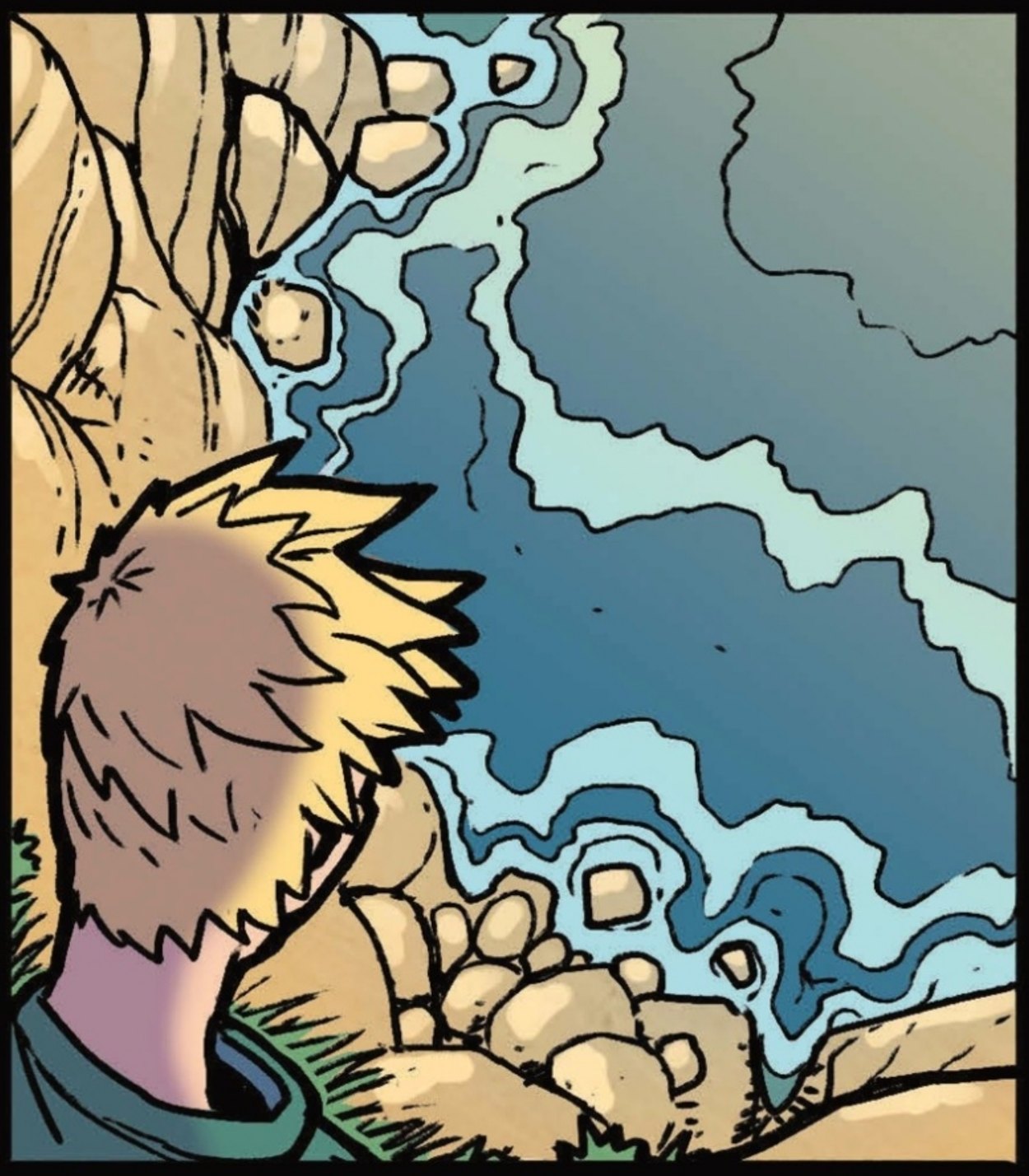
WHAT DO YOU THINK, FREDDY? WILL I GET TO SEE ANNA ON SOME OTHER SPIRITUAL PLANE?

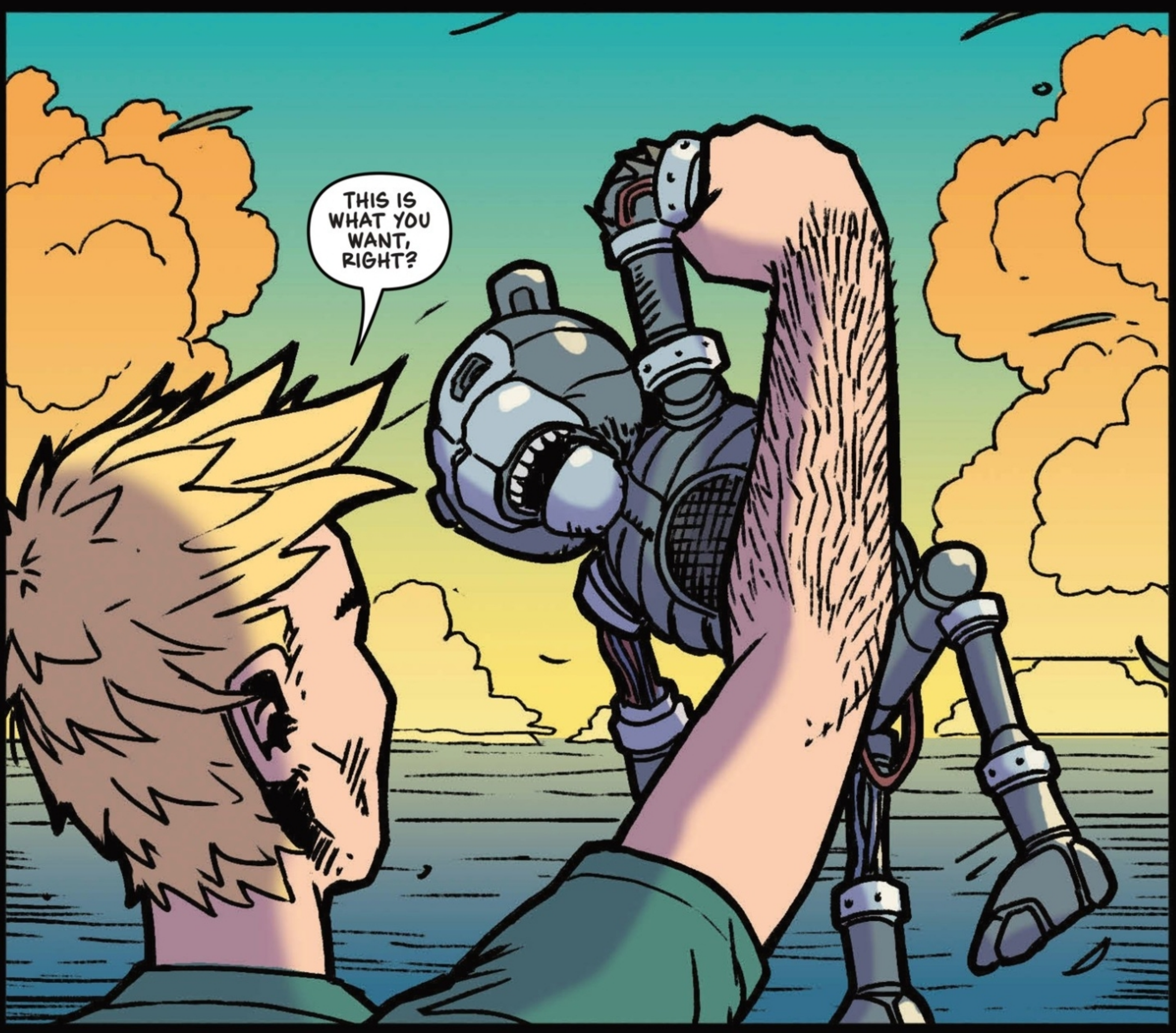
I'LL GET TO SEE TYLER, TOO, IF HE'S–

IF HE'S . . .

. . .






THIS IS WHAT YOU WANT, RIGHT?

ANNA . . .

YOU DIED ON WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE HAPPIEST DAY OF YOUR LIFE.

YOU WOULD HAVE NEVER CHOSEN SUCH AN EARLY EXIT . . .

I KNOW YOU WOULDN'T WANT THAT FOR ME, EITHER.

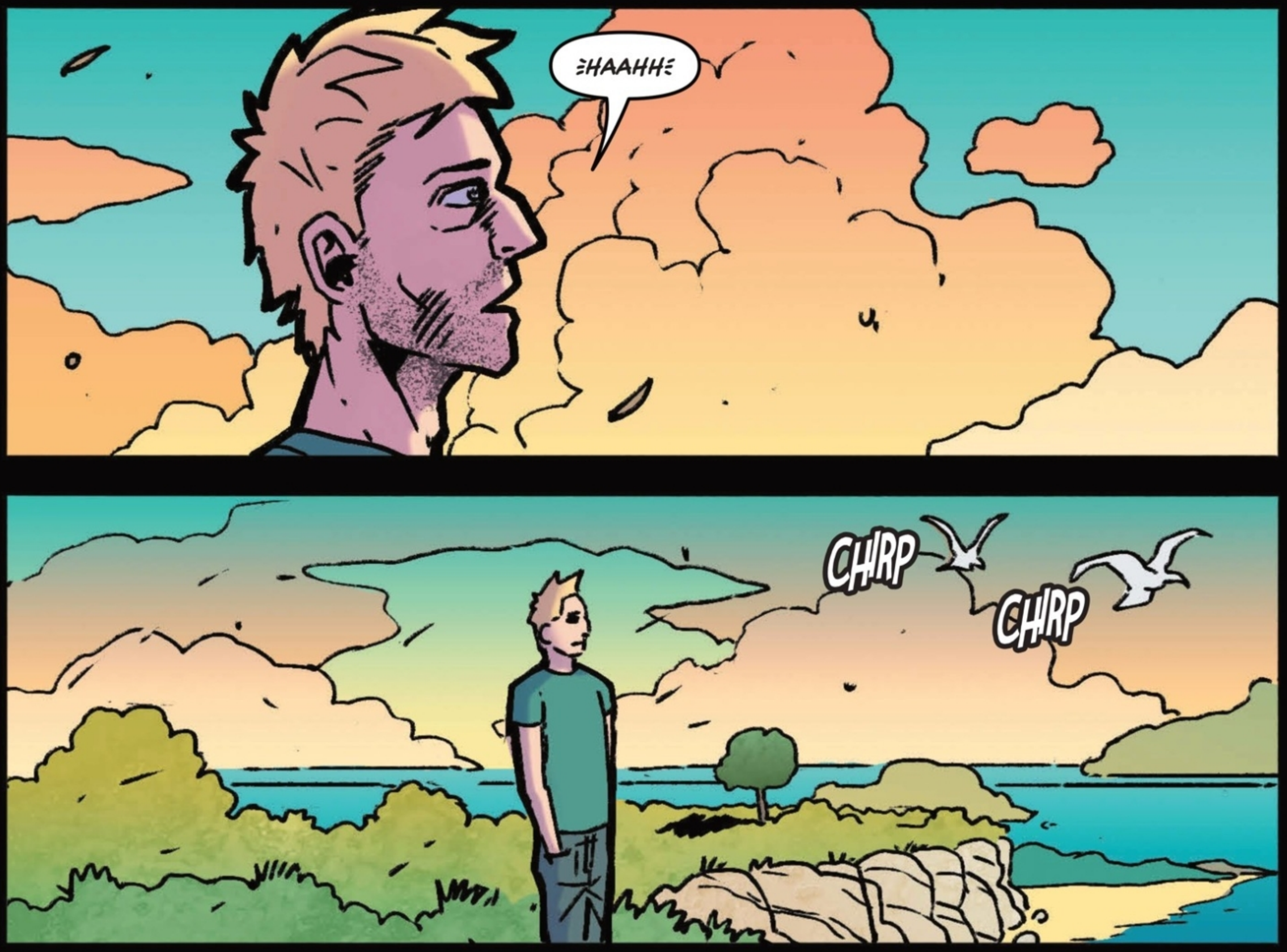
NOT THAT THE LIVING I'VE DONE SINCE YOU LEFT HAS BEEN REALLY LIVING.

SHE WOULDN'T WANT TO SEE ME SHUT OUT MY FRIENDS, EATING SAD SANDWICHES . . .

BARELY BEING ABLE TO HOLD A CONVERSATION WITH ANOTHER ADULT . . .

SHE WOULDN'T HAVE WANTED ME TO GIVE UP ON MYSELF.

AND I'M NOT GIVING UP ON TYLER, EITHER!


=HAAHH=
CHIRP
CHIRP
?!
WHAT WAS THAT? A CAT?
oOowWww . . .
=SNIFF=
OW . . .

OR A HUMAN—

TYLER?!

TYLER, IS THAT YOU?!

DADDY!

DADDY, COME GET ME!

I CAN'T FIT IN THAT HOLE, BUDDY. YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO COME TO ME.

DON'T KNOW HOW! STUCK!

COME TOWARD MY VOICE, BUDDY! YOU CAN DO IT!

SKRTCH

CLAK

SKRIIIITCH

THERE YOU ARE!

YOU SCARED ME HALF TO DEATH, BUDDY.

WHY IN THE WORLD DID YOU RUN OFF LIKE THAT?

I SAW A DOGGIE.

SO YOU TRIED TO FOLLOW THE DOGGIE AND GOT LOST.

UH-HUH.

WELL, THAT WAS REALLY DANGEROUS, BUDDY. PROMISE ME YOU'LL NEVER LEAVE THE YARD WITHOUT ME AGAIN.

OKAY, DADDY.

GOOD. LET'S GO HOME. I'LL BET YOU'RE THIRSTY, HUH?

YEAH.

WE'LL GET YOU A BIG CUP OF WATER, AND A BANANA YOU CAN DIP IN PEANUT BUTTER. AND I'LL MAKE MY SPECIAL MAC AND CHEESE FOR SUPPER, OKAY?

YUMMY!

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT, DADDY?

NOTHING, BUDDY.

BUT LOOK HOW PRETTY THE SKY IS.

YOUR MOMMY USED TO HAVE A DRESS THE COLOR OF THOSE CLOUDS.

MOMMY PRETTY.

YES, SHE WAS. WOULD YOU LIKE TO LOOK AT SOME PICTURES OF YOUR MOMMY SOMETIME SOON?

YEAH!

I CAN'T WAIT TO TELL YOU ALL ABOUT HER.